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AN
HISTORY
OF THE
EARTH,

AND
ANIMATED NATURE:

128c

BY OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

K-

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

NATURAL HISTORY, considered in its utmost extent, comprehends two objects. First, that of discovering, ascertaining, and naming all the various productions of nature. Secondly, that of describing the properties, manners, and relations, which they bear to us, and to each other. The first, which is the most difficult part of this science, is systematical, dry, mechanical, and incomplete. The second is more amusing, exhibits new pictures to the imagination, and improves our relish for existence, by widening the prospect of nature around us.

Both, however, are necessary to those who would understand this pleasing

VOL. I.

science, in its utmost extent. The first care of every enquirer, no doubt should be, to see to visit and examine every object, before he pretends to inspect its habitudes or its history. From seeing and observing the thing itself, he is most naturally led to speculate upon its uses, its delights, or its inconveniences.

Numberless obstructions, however, are found in this part of his pursuit, that frustrate his diligence and retard his curiosity. The objects in nature are so many, and even those of the same kind are exhibited in such a variety of forms, that the enquirer finds himself lost, in the exuberance before him, and, like a man who attempts to count the stars unassisted by art, his powers are all distracted in the barren superfluity.

To remedy this embarrassment, artificial systems have been devised, which grouping into masses those parts of nature more nearly resembling each other, refer the enquirer for the name of the single

P R E F A C E. iii

object he desires to know to some one of those general distributions, where it is to be found by further examination.

If, for instance, a man should, in his walks, meet with an animal, the name, and consequently the history of which, he desires to know, he is taught by systematic writers of natural history, to examine its most obvious qualities, whether a quadrupede, a bird, a fish, or an insect. Having determined it, for explanation sake, to be an insect, he examines whether it has wings; if he finds it possessed of these, he is taught to examine whether it has two or four; if possessed of four, he is taught to observe, whether the two upper wings are of a shelly hardness, and serve as cases to those under them; if he finds the wings composed in this manner, he is then taught to pronounce, that this insect is one of the beetle kind: of the beetle kind, there are three different classes, distinguished from each other by their feelers; he examines the insect before

iv P R E F A C E.

him, and finds that the feelers are clavated or knobbed at the ends; of beetles, with feelers thus formed, there are ten kinds; and among those, he is taught to look for the precise name of that which is before him. If, for instance, the knob be divided at the ends, and the belly be streaked with white, it is no other than the Dor or the May-bug; an animal, the noxious qualities of which give it a very distinguished rank in the history of the insect creation. In this manner a system of natural history may, in some measure, be compared to a dictionary of words. Both are solely intended to explain the names of things; but with this difference, that in the dictionary of words we are led from the name of the thing to its definition; whereas in the system of natural history, we are led from the definition to find out the name.

Such are the efforts of writers, who have composed their works with great labour and ingenuity, to direct the learner in his

P R E F A C E. v

progress through nature, and to inform him of the name of every animal, plant, or fossil substance, that he happens to meet with; but it would be only deceiving the reader, to conceal the truth, which is, that books alone can never teach him this art in perfection; and the solitary student can never succeed. Without a master, and a previous knowledge of many of the objects in nature, his book will only serve to confound and disgust him. Few of the individual plants or animals, that he may happen to meet with, are in that precise state of health, or that exact period of vegetation, from whence their descriptions were taken. Perhaps he meets the plant only with leaves, but the systematic writer has described it in flower. Perhaps he meets the bird before it has moulted its first feathers, while the systematic description was made in its state of full perfection. He thus ranges without an instructor, confused and with sickening curiosity from subject to subject, till at last he gives up the pursuit,

in the multiplicity of his disappointments.

Some practice therefore, much instruction and diligent reading are requisite to make a ready and expert naturalist, who shall be able, even by the help of a system, to find out the name of every object he meets with. But when this tedious, though requisite part of study is attained, nothing but delight and variety attend the rest of his journey. Wherever he travels, like a man in a country where he has many friends, he meets with nothing but acquaintances and allurements in all the stages of his way. The meer uninformed spectator passes on in gloomy solitude; but the naturalist, in every plant, in every insect, and every pebble, finds something to entertain his curiosity, and excite his speculation.

From hence it appears, that a system may be considered as a dictionary in the study of nature. The ancients, however, who have all written most delightfully on this subject, seem entirely to have rejected

those humble and mechanical helps to science. They contented themselves with seizing upon the great outlines of history, and passing over what was common, as not worth the detail; they only dwelt upon what was new, great, and surprising, and sometimes even warmed the imagination at the expence of truth. Such of the moderns as revived this science in Europe undertook the task more methodically, though not in a manner so pleasing. Aldrovandus, Gesner, and Johnson, seemed desirous of uniting the entertaining and rich descriptions of the ancients with the dry and systematic arrangement, of which they were the first projectors. This attempt, however, was extremely imperfect, as the great variety of nature was, as yet, but very inadequately known. Nevertheless, by attempting to carry on both objects at once; first, of directing us to the name, of the thing; and then, giving the detail of its history, they drew out their works into a tedious and unreasonable length;

viii P R E F A C E.

and thus mixing incompatible aims they have left their labours, rather to be occasionally consulted than read with delight by posterity.

The later moderns, with that good sense which they have carried into every other part of science, have taken a different method in cultivating natural history. They have been content to give, not only the brevity, but also the dry and disgusting air of a dictionary to their systems. Ray, Klein, Brisson, and Linnæus, have had only one aim, that of pointing out the object in nature, of discovering its name, and where it was to be found in those authors that treated of it in a more prolix and satisfactory manner. Thus natural history at present is carried on, in two distinct and separate channels, the one serving to lead us to the thing, the other conveying the history of the thing, as supposing it already known.

The following Natural History is written, with only such an attention to system as serves to remove the reader's em-

barrassments, and allure him to proceed. It can make no pretensions in directing him to the name of every object he meets with ; that belongs to works of a very different kind, and written with very different aims. It will fully answer my design, if the reader, being already possesst of the name of any animal, shall find here a short, though satisfactory history of its habitudes, its subsistence, its manners, its friendships and hostilities. My aim has been to carry on just as much method, as was sufficient to shorten my descriptions by generalizing them, and never to follow order where the art of writing, which is but another name for good sense, informed me that it would only contribute to the reader's embarrassment.

Still, however, the reader will perceive, that I have formed a kind of system in the history of every part of animated nature, directing myself by the great obvious distinctions that she herself seems to have made, which, though too few to

x P R E F A C E.

point exactly to the name, are yet sufficient to illuminate the subject, and remove the reader's perplexity. Mr. Buffon, indeed, who has brought greater talents to this part of learning than any other man, has almost entirely rejected method in classing quadrupedes. This, with great deference to such a character, appears to me running into the opposite extreme; and, as some moderns have of late spent much time, great pains, and some learning, all to very little purpose, in systematic arrangement, he seems so much disgusted by their trifling, but ostentatious efforts, that he describes his animals, almost in the order they happen to come before him. This want of method seems to be a fault; but he can lose little by a criticism which every dull man can make, or by an error in arrangement, from which the dullest are the most usually free.

In other respects, as far as this able philosopher has gone, I have taken

P R E F A C E. xi

him for my guide. The warmth of his style, and the brilliancy of his imagination, are inimitable. Leaving him therefore without a rival in these, and only availing myself of his information, I have been content to describe things in my own way ; and though many of the materials are taken from him, yet I have added, retrenched, and altered, as I thought proper. It was my intention at one time, whenever I differed from him, to have mentioned it at the bottom of the page ; but this occurred so often, that I soon found it would look like envy, and might perhaps, convict me of those very errors which I was wanting to lay upon him. I have therefore, as being every way his debtor, concealed my dissent, where my opinion was different ; but wherever I borrow from him, I take care at the bottom of the page to express my obligations. But though my obligations to this writer are many, they extend but to the smallest part of the work, as he has hitherto compleated only the his-

xii P R E F A C E.

tory of quadrupedes. I was therefore left to my own reading alone, to make out the history of birds, fishes and insects, of which the arrangement was so difficult, and the necessary information so widely diffused and so obscurely related when found, that it proved by much the most laborious part of the undertaking. Thus having made use of Mr. Buffon's lights in the first part of the work, I may, with some share of confidence, recommend it to the public. But what shall I say to that part, where I have been entirely left without his assistance? As I would affect neither modesty nor confidence, it will be sufficient to say, that my reading upon this part of the subject has been very extensive; and that I have taxed my scanty circumstances in procuring books which are on this subject, of all others, the most expensive. In consequence of this industry, I here offer a work to the public, of a kind, which has never been attempted in ours, or any other modern language, that I know

of. The ancients, indeed, and Pliny in particular, have anticipated me, in the present manner of treating natural history. Like those historians who describe the events of a campaign, they have not condescended to give the private particulars of every individual that formed the army; they were content with characterizing the generals, and describing their operations, while they left it to meaner hands to carry the muster-roll. I have followed their manner, rejecting the numerous fables which they adopted, and adding the improvements of the moderns, which are so numerous, that they actually make up the bulk of natural history.

The delight which I found in reading Pliny, first inspired me with the idea of a work of this nature. Having a taste rather classical than scientific, and having but little employed myself in turning over the dry labours of modern system-makers, my earliest intention was to translate this agreeable writer, and by the help of a commentary to make

xiv P R E F A C E.

my work as amusing as I could. Let us dignify natural history never so much with the grave appellation of a useful science, yet still we must confess that it is the occupation of the idle and the speculative, more than of the busy and the ambitious part of mankind. My intention therefore was to treat what I then conceived to be an idle subject, in an idle manner; and not to hedge round plain and simple narratives with hard words, accumulated distinctions, ostentatious learning, and disquisitions that produced no conviction. Upon the appearance however of Mr. Buffon's work, I dropped my former plan, and adopted the present, being convinced by his manner, that the best imitation of the ancients was to write from our own feelings, and to imitate nature.

It will be my chief pride therefore, if this work may be found an innocent amusement for those who have nothing else to employ them, or who require a relaxation from labour. Professed naturalists will, no doubt, find it superficial;

P R E F A C E. xv

and yet I should hope that even these will discover hints, and remarks, gleaned from various reading, not wholly trite or elementary. I would wish for their approbation. But my chief ambition is to drag up the obscure and gloomy learning of the cell to open inspection ; to strip it from its garb of austerity, and to shew the beauties of that form, which only the industrious and the inquisitive have been hitherto permitted to approach.

CONTENTS.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
CHAP. I. A Sketch of the Universe	1
II. A short Survey of the Globe, from the Light of Astronomy and Geography —	8
III. A View of the Surface of the Earth	15
IV. A Review of the different Theories the Earth —	21
V. Of Fossil-shells, and other extra- neous Fossils —	39
VII. Of the internal Structure of the Earth —	51
VIII. Of Caves, and Subterraneous Passages that sink, but not per- pendicularly, into the Earth	63
*VIII. Of Mines, Damp, and Mineral Vapours —	73

C O N T E N T S.

	Page
IX. Of Volcanoes and Earthquakes	87
X. Of Earthquakes —	104
XI. Of the Appearance of New Islands, and Tracts; and of the Disap- pearing of others —	124
XII. Of Mountains —	136
XIII. Of Water —	163
XIV. Of the Origin of Rivers	193
XV. Of the Ocean in general, and of its Saltnefs —	227
XVI. Of the Tides, Motion, and Cur- rents of the Sea; with their Ef- fects — —	249
XVII. Of the Changes produced by the Sea upon the Earth —	269
XVIII. A Summary Account of the Mechanical Properties of Air	298
XIX. An Essay towards a Natural History of the Air —	311
XX. Of Winds, irregular and regular	337
XXI. Of Meteors, and such Appear- ances as result from a Combina- tion of the Elements	367
XXII. The Conclusion.	397

A N
H I S T O R Y
O F T H E
E A R T H.

C H A P. I.

A Sketch of the Universe.

THE world may be considered as one vast mansion, where man has been admitted to enjoy, to admire, and to be grateful. The first desires of savage nature are merely to gratify the importunities of sensual appetite, and to neglect the contemplation of things, barely satisfied with their enjoyment: the beauties of nature, and all the wonders of creation, have but little charms for a being taken up in obviating the wants of the day, and anxious for precarious subsistence.

Vol. I.

B

Our philosophers, therefore, who have testified such surprize at the want of curiosity in the ignorant, seem not to consider that they are usually employed in making provisions of a more important nature; in providing rather for the necessities than the amusements of life. It is not till our more pressing wants are sufficiently supplied, that we can attend to the calls of curiosity; so that in every age scientific refinement has been the latest effort of human industry.

But human curiosity, though, at first, slowly excited, being at last possessed of leisure for indulging its propensity, becomes one of the greatest amusements of life, and gives higher satisfactions than whatever the senses can afford. A man of this disposition turns all nature into a magnificent theatre, replete with objects of wonder and surprize, and fitted up chiefly for his happiness and entertainment: he industriously examines all things, from the minutest insect to the most finished animal; and, when his limited organs can no longer make the disquisition, he sends out his imagination upon new enquiries.

Nothing, therefore, can be more august and striking than the idea which his reason, aided by his imagination, furnishes of the universe

around him. Astronomers tell us, that this earth which we inhabit forms but a very minute part in that great assemblage of bodies of which the world is composed. It is a million of times less than the sun, by which it is enlightened. The planets also, which, like it, are subordinate to the sun's influence, exceed the earth one thousand times in magnitude. These, which were at first supposed to wander in the heavens without any fixed path, and that took their name from their apparent deviations, have long been found to perform their circuits with great exactness and strict regularity. They have been discovered as forming with our earth a system of bodies circulating round the sun, all obedient to one law, and impelled by one common influence.

Modern philosophy has taught us to believe, that, when the great Author of nature began the work of creation, he chose to operate by second causes; and, that, suspending the constant exertion of his power, he endued matter with a quality by which the universal œconomy of nature might be continued without his immediate assistance. This quality is called *attraction*; a sort of approximating influence, which all bodies, whether terrestrial or celestial, are found to possess; and which in all

4 AN HISTORY OF

increases as the quantity of matter in each increases. The sun, by far the greatest body in our system, is, of consequence, possessed of much the greatest share of this attracting power; and all the planets, of which our earth is one, are, of course, entirely subject to its superior influence. Were this power, therefore, left uncontrolled by any other, the sun must quickly have attracted all the bodies of our celestial system to itself; but it is equably counteracted by another power of equal efficacy; namely, a progressive force which each planet received when it was impelled forward, by the divine architect, upon its first formation. The heavenly bodies of our system being thus acted upon by two opposing powers; namely, by that of *attraction*, which draws them towards the sun; and that of *impulsion*, which drives them straight forward into the great void of space; they pursue a track between these contrary directions; and each, like a stone whirled about in a sling, obeying two opposite forces, circulates round its great centre of heat and motion.

In this manner, therefore, is the harmony of our planetary system preserved. The sun, in the midst, gives heat, and light, and circular motion to the planets which surround it: Mercury, Venus, the Earth, Mars, Jupiter,

THE EARTH.

§

and Saturn, perform their constant circuits at different distances, each taking up a time to compleat its revolutions proportioned to the greatness of the circle which it is to describe. The lesser planets also, which are attendants upon some of the greater, are subject to the same laws; they circulate with the same exactness; and are, in the same manner, influenced by their respective centres of motion.

Besides those bodies which make a part of our peculiar system, and which may be said to reside within its great circumference; there are others, that frequently come among us, from the most distant tracts of space, and that seem like dangerous intruders upon the beautiful simplicity of nature. These are comets, whose appearance was once so terrible to mankind, and the theory of which is so little understood at present: all we know, is, that their number is much greater than that of the planets; and that, like these, they roll in orbits, in some measure, obedient to Solar influence. Astronomers have endeavoured to calculate the returning periods of many of them; but experience has not, as yet, confirmed the veracity of their investigations: indeed, who can tell when those wanderers have made their excursions into other worlds and distant systems, what

obstacles may be found to oppose their progress, to accelerate their motions, or retard their return?

But what we have hitherto attempted to sketch, is but a small part of that great fabric in which the Deity has thought proper to manifest his wisdom and omnipotence. There are multitudes of other bodies dispersed over the face of the heavens that lie too remote for examination: these have no motion, such as the planets are found to possess, and are, therefore, called fixed stars; and from their extreme brilliancy and their immense distance, philosophers have been induced to suppose them to be suns resembling that which enlivens our system: as the imagination also, once excited, is seldom content to stop, it has furnished each with an attendant system of planets belonging to itself, and has even induced some to deplore the fate of those systems, whose imagined suns, which sometimes happens, have become no longer visible.

But conjectures of this kind, which no reasoning can ascertain, nor experiment reach, are rather amusing than useful. Though we see the greatness and wisdom of the Deity in all the seeming worlds that surround us, it is our chief concern to trace him in that which

we inhabit. The examination of the earth, the wonders of its contrivance, the history of its advantages, or of the seeming defects in its formation, are the proper business of the *natural historian*. A description of this earth, its *animals, vegetables, and minerals*, is the most delightful entertainment the mind can be furnished with, as it is the most interesting and useful. I would beg leave, therefore, to conclude these common-place speculations, with an observation, which, I hope, is not entirely so.

An use, hitherto not much insisted upon, that may result from the contemplation of celestial magnificence, is, that it will teach us to make an allowance for the apparent irregularities we find below. Whenever we can examine the works of the Deity at a proper point of distance, so as to take in the whole of his design, we see nothing but uniformity, beauty, and precision. The heavens present us with a plan, which, though inexpressibly magnificent, is yet regular beyond the power of invention. Whenever, therefore, we find any apparent defects in the earth, which we are about to consider, instead of attempting to reason ourselves into an opinion that they are beautiful, it will be wiser to say, that we do not behold them at the proper

point of distance, and that our eye is laid too close to the objects to take in the regularity of their connexion. In short, we may conclude, that God, who is regular in his great productions, acts with equal uniformity in the little.

C H A P. II.

A short Survey of the Globe, from the Light of Astronomy and Geography.

ALL the sciences are in some measure linked with each other, and before the one is ended the other begins. In a natural history, therefore, of the earth, we must begin with a short account of its situation and form, as given us by astronomers and geographers: it will be sufficient, however, upon this occasion, just to hint to the imagination, what they, by the most abstract reasonings, have forced upon the understanding. The earth which we inhabit is, as has been said before, one of those bodies which circulate in our solar system; it is placed at an happy middle distance from the centre; and even seems, in this respect, privileged beyond all other planets that depend upon our great luminary for their support. Less distant from the sun than Saturn, Jupiter,

and Mars, and yet less parched up than Venus and Mercury, that are situate too near the violence of its power, the earth seems in a peculiar manner to share the bounty of the Creator: it is not, therefore, without reason that mankind consider themselves as the peculiar objects of his providence and regard.

Besides that motion which the earth has round the sun, the circuit of which is performed in a year, it has another upon its own axle, which it performs in twenty-four hours. Thus, like a chariot-wheel, it has a compound motion; for while it goes forward on its journey, it is all the while turning upon itself. From the first of these two arise the grateful vicissitude of the seasons; from the second, that of day and night.

It may be also readily conceived, that a body thus wheeling in circles will most probably be itself a sphere. The earth, beyond all possibility of doubt, is found to be so. Whenever its shadow happens to fall upon the moon, in an eclipse, it appears to be always circular, in whatever position it is projected: and it is easy to prove, that a body which in every position makes a circular shadow, must itself be round. The rotundity of the earth may be also proved from the meeting of two ships at sea: the top

mafts of each are the first parts that are discovered by both, the under parts being hidden by the convexity of the globe which rises between them. The ships in this instance may be resembled to two men who approach each other on the opposite sides of an hill: their heads will first be seen, and gradually as they come nearer they will come entirely into view.

However, though the earth's figure is said to be spherical, we ought only to conceive it as being nearly so. It has been found in the last age to be rather flatted at both poles, so that its form is commonly resembled to that of a turnep. The cause of this swelling of the equator is ascribed to the greater rapidity of the motion with which the parts of the earth are there carried round; and which, consequently, endeavouring to fly off, act in opposition to central attraction. The twirling of a mop may serve as an homely illustration; which, as every one has seen, spreads and grows broader in the middle as it continues to be turned round.

As the earth receives light and motion from the sun, so it derives much of its warmth and power of vegetation from the same beneficent source. However, the different parts of the globe participate of these advantages in very

different proportions, and accordingly put on very different appearances; a polar prospect, and a landscape at the equator, are as opposite in their appearances as in their situation.

The polar regions, that receive the solar beams in a very oblique direction, and that continue for one half of the year in night, receive but few of the genial comforts that other parts of the world enjoy. Nothing can be more mournful or hideous than the picture which travellers present of those wretched regions. The ground *, which is rocky and barren, rears itself in every place in lofty mountains and inaccessible cliffs, and meets the mariner's eye at even forty leagues from shore. These precipices, frightful in themselves, receive an additional horror from being constantly covered with ice and snow, which daily seem to accumulate and to fill all the vallies with encreasing desolation. The few rocks and cliffs, that are bare of snow, look at a distance of a dark brown colour, and quite naked. Upon a nearer approach, however, they are found replete with many different veins of coloured stone, and here and there spread over with a little earth, and a scanty portion of grass and heath. The internal parts of the country are

* Crantz's history of Greenland, p. 3.

still more desolate and deterring. In wandering this solitude, some plains appear covered with ice, that, at first glance, seem to promise the traveller an easy journey *. But these are even more formidable and more unpassable than the mountains themselves, being cleft with dreadful chasms, and every where abounding with pits that threaten certain destruction. The seas that surround these inhospitable coasts, are still more astonishing, being covered with flakes of floating ice, that spread like extensive fields, or that rise out of the water like enormous mountains. These, which are composed of materials as clear and transparent as glass †, assume many strange and phantastic appearances. Some of them look like churches or castles, with pointed turrets; some like ships in full sail; and people have often given themselves the fruitless toil to attempt piloting the imaginary vessels into harbour. There are still others that appear like large islands, with plains, valleys, and hills, which often rear their heads two hundred yards above the level of the sea; and although the height of these be amazing, yet their depth beneath is still more so; some of them being found to sink three hundred fathom under water.

* Crantz's history of Greenland, p. 22.

† Ibid. 27.

The earth presents a very different appearance at the equator, where the sun-beams, darting directly downwards, burn up the lighter soils into extensive sandy deserts, or quicken all the moister tracts with incredible vegetation. In these regions, almost all the same inconveniences are felt from the proximity of the sun, that in the former were endured from its absence. The deserts are entirely barren except where they are found to produce serpents, and that in such quantities, that some extensive plains seem almost entirely covered with them*.

It not unfrequently happens also that this dry soil, which is so parched and comminuted by the force of the sun, rises with the smallest breeze of wind; and the sands being composed of parts almost as small as those of water, they assume a similar appearance, rolling onward in waves like those of a troubled sea, and overwhelming all they meet with inevitable destruction. On the other hand, those tracts which are fertile, teem with vegetation even to a noxious degree. The grass rises to such an height as often to require burning; the forests are impassable from underwoods, and so matted above, that even the sun, fierce as it is, can seldom penetrate†. These are so thick as

* Adanson's Description of Senegal.

† Linnæi Amœnit. vol. vi. p. 67.

scarce to be extirpated ; for the tops being so bound together by the climbing plants that grow round them, though an hundred should be cut at the bottom, yet not one would fall, as they mutually support each other. In these dark and tangled forests, beasts of various kinds, insects in astonishing abundance, and serpents of surprizing magnitude, find a quiet retreat from man, and are seldom disturbed except by each other.

In this manner the extremes of our globe seem equally unfitted for the comforts and conveniencies of life ; and, although the imagination may find an awful pleasure in contemplating the frightful precipices of Greenland, or the luxurious verdure of Africa, yet true happiness can only be found in the more moderate climates, where the gifts of nature may be enjoyed without incurring danger in obtaining them.

It is in the temperate zone, therefore, that all the arts of improving nature, and refining upon happiness, have been invented : and this part of the earth is, more properly speaking, the theatre of natural history. Although there be millions of animals and vegetables in the unexplored forests under the line, yet most of these may for ever continue unknown, as

curiosity is there repressed by surrounding danger. But it is otherwise in these delightful regions which we inhabit, and where this art has had its beginning. Among us there is scarce a shrub, a flower, or an insect, without its particular history; scarce a plant that could be useful that has not been propagated; nor a weed that could be noxious which has not been pointed out.

C H A P. III.

A View of the Surface of the Earth.

WHEN we take a slight survey of the surface of our globe, a thousand objects offer themselves, which, though long known, yet still demand our curiosity. The most obvious beauty that every where strikes the eye is the verdant covering of the earth, which is formed by an happy mixture of herbs and trees of various magnitudes and uses. It has been often remarked that no colour refreshes the sight so well as green; and it may be added, as a further proof of the assertion, that the inhabitants of those places where the fields are continually white with snow, generally become blind long before the usual course of nature.

This advantage, which arises from the verdure of the fields, is not a little improved by their agreeable inequalities. There is scarce two natural landscapes that offer prospects entirely resembling each other; their risings and depressions, their hills and valleys, are never entirely the same, but always offer something new to entertain and refresh the imagination.

But to encrease the beauties of the face of nature, the landscape is enlivened by springs and lakes, and intersected by rivulets. These lend a brightness to the prospect; give motion and coolness to the air; and, what is much more important, furnish health and subsistence to animated nature.

Such are the most obvious and tranquil objects that every where offer: but there are others of a more awful and magnificent kind; the *Mountain* rising above the clouds, and topt with snow; the *River* pouring down its sides, encreasing as it runs, and losing itself, at last, in the ocean; the *Ocean* spreading its immense sheet of waters over one half of the globe, swelling and subsiding at well-known intervals, and forming a communication between the most distant parts of the earth.

If we leave those objects that seem to be natural to our earth, and keep the same con-

stant tenor, we are presented with the great irregularities of nature. The burning mountain; the abrupt precipice; the unfathomable cavern; the headlong cataract; and the rapid whirlpool.

If we carry our curiosity a little further, and descend to the objects immediately below the surface of the globe, we shall there find wonders still as amazing. We first perceive the earth for the most part lying in regular beds or layers, every bed growing thicker in proportion as it lies deeper, and its contents more compact and heavy. We shall find, almost wherever we make our subterranean enquiry, an amazing number of shells that once belonged to aquatic animals. Here and there, at a distance from the sea, beds of oyster-shells, several yards thick, and many miles over; sometimes testaceous substances of various kinds on the tops of mountains, and often in the heart of the hardest marble. These, which are dug up by the peasants, in every country, are regarded with little curiosity; for being so very common, they are considered as substances entirely terrene. But it is otherwise with the enquirer after nature, who finds them, not only in shape but in substance, every way resembling those that are bred in the sea; and he,

therefore, is at a loss to account for their removal.

Yet not one part of nature alone, but all her productions and varieties, become the object of the speculative man's enquiry: he takes different views of nature from the inattentive spectator; and scarce an appearance, how common soever, but affords matter for his contemplation: he enquires how and why the surface of the earth has come to have those risings and depressions which most men call natural; he demands in what manner the mountains were formed, and in what consist their uses; he asks from whence springs arise; and how rivers flow round the convexity of the globe; he enters into an examination of the ebbings and flowings, and the other wonders of the deep; he acquaints himself with the irregularities of nature, and he will endeavour to investigate their causes; by which, at least, he will become better versed in their history. The internal structure of the globe becomes an object of his curiosity; and, although his enquiries can fathom but a very little way, yet, if possessed with a spirit of theory, his imagination will supply the rest. He will endeavour to account for the situation of the marine fossils that are found in the earth, and for the ap-

pearance of the different beds of which it is composed. These have been the enquiries that have splendidly employed many of the philosophers of the last and present age*; and, to a certain degree, they must be serviceable. But the worst of it is, that, as speculations amuse the writer more than facts, they may be often carried to an extravagant length; and that time may be spent in reasoning upon nature, which might be more usefully employed in writing her history.

Too much speculation in natural history is certainly wrong; but there is a defect of an opposite nature that does much more prejudice; namely, that of silencing all enquiry, by alledging the benefits we receive from a thing, instead of investigating the cause of its production. If I enquire how a mountain came to be made, such a reasoner, enumerating its benefits, answers, because God knew it would be useful. If I demand the cause of an earthquake, he finds some good produced by it, and alledges that as the cause of its explosion. Thus such an enquirer has constantly some ready reason for every appearance in nature, which serves to swell his periods, and give splendour

* Buffon, Woodward, Burnet, Whiston, Kircher, Bourquat, Leibnitz, Steno, Ray, &c.

to his declamation : every thing about him is, on some account or other, declared to be good; and he thinks it presumption to scrutinize into its defects, or to endeavour to imagine how it might be better. Such writers, and there are many such, add very little to the advancement of knowledge; and it is finely remarked by Bacon, that the investigation of final causes* is a barren study; and, like a virgin dedicated to the Deity, brings forth nothing. In fact, those men who want to compel every appearance and every irregularity in nature into our service, and expatiate on their benefits, combat that very morality which they would seem to promote. God has permitted thousands of natural evils to exist in the world, because it is by their intervention that man is capable of moral evil; and he has permitted that we should be subject to moral evil, that we might do something to deserve eternal happiness by shewing that we had rectitude to avoid it.

* Investigatio causarum finalium sterilis est, et veluti virgo Deo dedicata, nil parit.

C H A P. IV.

A Review of the different Theories of the Earth.

HUMAN invention has been exercised for several ages to account for the various irregularities of the earth. While those philosophers mentioned in the last chapter see nothing but beauty, symmetry, and order; there are others, who look upon the gloomy side of nature, enlarge on its defects, and seem to consider the earth, on which they tread, as one scene of extensive desolation*. Beneath its surface they observe minerals and waters confusedly jumbled together; its different beds of earth irregularly lying upon each other; mountains rising from places that once were level†; and hills sinking into vallies; whole regions swallowed by the sea, and others again rising out of its bosom: all these they suppose to be but a few of the changes that have been wrought in our globe; and they send out imagination to describe it in its primæval state of beauty.

Of those who have written theories describing the manner of the original formation of the

* Buffon's second discourse.

† Senec. Quæst. lib. vi. cap. 21.

earth, or accounting for its present appearances, the most celebrated are Burnet, Whiston, Woodward, and Buffon. As speculation is endless, so it is not to be wondered that all these differ from each other, and give opposite accounts of the several changes, which they suppose our earth to have undergone. As the systems of each have had their admirers, it is, in some measure, incumbent upon the natural historian to be acquainted, at least, with their out-lines; and, indeed, to know what others have even dreamed, in matters of science, is very useful, as it may often prevent us from indulging similar delusions ourselves, which we should never have adopted, but because we take them to be wholly our own. However, as entering into a detail of these theories, is rather furnishing an history of opinions than things, I will endeavour to be as concise as I can.

The first who formed this amusement of earth-making into system was the celebrated Thomas Burnet, a man of polite learning and rapid imagination. His *Sacred Theory*, as he calls it, describing the changes which the earth has undergone, or shall hereafter undergo, is well known for the warmth with which it is imagined, and the weakness with which it

is reasoned, for the elegance of its style, and the meanness of its philosophy. The earth, says he, before the deluge, was very differently formed from what it is at present : it was at first a fluid mass ; a chaos composed of various substances, differing both in density and figure : those which were most heavy sunk to the center, and formed in the middle of our globe an hard solid body ; those of a lighter nature remained next ; and the waters, which were lighter still, swam upon its surface, and covered the earth on every side. The air, and all those fluids which were lighter than water, floated upon this also ; and in the same manner encompassed the globe ; so that between the surrounding body of waters, and the circumambient air, there was formed a coat of oil, and other unctuous substances, lighter than water. However, as the air was still extremely impure, and must have carried up with it many of those earthly particles with which it once was intimately blended, it soon began to defecate, and to depose these particles upon the only surface already mentioned, which soon uniting together, the earth and oil formed that crust, which soon became an habitable surface, giving life to vegetation, and dwelling to animals.

This imaginary antideluvian abode was

very different from what we see it at present. The earth was light and rich ; and formed of a substance entirely adapted to the feeble state of incipient vegetation : it was an uniform plain, every where covered with verdure ; without mountains, without seas, or the smallest inequalities. It had no difference of seasons, for its equator was in the plain of the ecliptic, or, in other words, it turned directly opposite to the sun, so that it enjoyed one perpetual and luxuriant spring. However, this delightful face of nature did not long continue the same, for, after a time, it began to crack and open in fissures ; a circumstance which always succeeds when the sun dries away the moisture from rich or marshy situations. The crimes of mankind had been for some time preparing to draw down the wrath of Heaven ; and they, at length, induced the Deity to defer repairing these breaches in nature. Thus the chasms of the earth every day became wider, and, at length, they penetrated to the great abyfs of waters ; and the whole earth, in a manner, fell in. Then ensued a total disorder in the uniform beauty of the first creation, the terrene surface of the globe being broken down : as it sunk the waters gushed out into its place ; the deluge became universal ; all mankind except eight persons

were punished with destruction, and their posterity condemned to toil upon the ruins of desolated nature.

It only remains to mention the manner in which he relieves the earth from this universal wreck, which would seem to be as difficult as even its first formation. "These great masses of earth falling into the abyfs, drew down with them vast quantities also of air; and by dashing against each other, and breaking into small parts by the repeated violence of the shock, they, at length, left between them large cavities filled with nothing but air. These cavities, naturally offered a bed to receive the influent waters; and in proportion as they filled, the face of the earth became once more visible. The higher parts of its broken surface, now become the tops of mountains, were the first that appeared; the plains soon after came forward, and, at length, the whole globe was delivered from the waters, except the places in the lowest situations; so that the ocean and the seas are still a part of the ancient abyfs that have not had a place to return. Islands and rocks are fragments of the earth's former crust; kingdoms and continents are larger masses of its broken substance; and all the inequalities that are to be found on the surface of the present earth, are owing to the acci-

dental confusion into which both earth and waters were then thrown.

The next theorist was Woodward, who, in his *Essay towards a Natural History of the Earth*, which was only designed to precede a greater work, has endeavoured to give a more rational account of its appearances; and was, in fact, much better furnished for such an undertaking than any of his predecessors, being one of the most assiduous naturalists of his time. His little book, therefore, contains many important facts, relative to natural history, although his system may be weak and groundless.

He begins by asserting that all terrene substances are disposed in beds of various natures, lying horizontally one over the other, somewhat like the coats of an onion; that they are replete with shells, and other productions of the sea: these shells being found in the deepest cavities, and on the tops of the highest mountains. From these observations, which are warranted by experience, he proceeds to observe, that these shells and extraneous fossils are not productions of the earth, but are all actual remains of those animals which they are known to resemble; that all the beds of the earth lie under each other, in the order of their specific gravity; and that they are disposed as if they had been left there by subsiding waters. All these

assertions he affirms with much earnestness, although daily experience contradicts him in some of them; particularly we find layers of stone often over the lightest soils, and the softest earth under the hardest bodies. However, having taken it for granted, that all the layers of the earth are found in the order of their specific gravity, the lightest at the top, and the heaviest next the centre, he consequently asserts, and it will not improbably follow, that all the substances of which the earth is composed, were once in an actual state of dissolution. This universal dissolution he takes to have happened at the time of the flood. He supposes that at that time a body of water, which was then in the center of the earth, uniting with that which was found on the surface, so far separated the terrene parts as to mix all together in one fluid mass; the contents of which afterwards sinking according to their respective gravities, produced the present appearances of the earth. Being aware, however, of an objection that fossile substances are not found dissolved, he exempts them from this universal dissolution, and, for that purpose, endeavours to shew that the parts of animals have a stronger cohesion than those of minerals; and that, while even the hardest rocks may be dissolved, bones and shells may still continue entire.

So much for Woodward ; but of all the systems which were published respecting the earth's formation, that of Whiston was most applauded, and most opposed. Nor need we wonder ; for being supported with all the parade of deep calculation, it awed the ignorant, and produced the approbation of such as would be thought otherwise, as it implied a knowledge of abstruse learning, to be even thought capable of comprehending what the writer aimed at. In fact, it is not easy to divest it of its mathematical garb ; but those who have had leisure, have found the result of our philosopher's reasoning to be thus. He supposes the earth to have been originally a comet ; and he considers the history of the creation, as given us in scripture, to have its commencement just when it was taken by the hand of the Creator, to be more regularly placed as a planet in our solar system. Before that time, he supposes it to have been a globe without beauty or proportion ; a world in disorder ; subject to all the vicissitudes which comets endure ; some of which have been found, at different times, a thousand times hotter than melted iron ; at others, a thousand times colder than ice. These alternations of heat and cold, continually melting and freezing the surface of the earth, he supposes to have produced, to a certain

depth, a chaos entirely resembling that described by the poets, surrounding the solid contents of the earth, which still continued unchanged in the midst, making a great burning globe of more than two thousand leagues in diameter. This surrounding chaos, however, was far from being solid: he resembles it to a dense though fluid atmosphere, composed of substances mingled, agitated, and shocked against each other; and in this disorder he describes the earth to have been just at the eve of creation.

But upon its orbit's being then changed, when it was more regularly wheeled round the sun, every thing took its proper place; every part of the surrounding fluid then fell into a situation, in proportion as it was light or heavy. The middle, or central part, which always remained unchanged, still continued so, retaining a part of that heat which it received in its primæval approaches towards the sun; which heat, he calculates, may continue for about six thousand years. Next to this fell the heavier parts of the chaotic atmosphere, which serve to sustain the lighter: but as in descending they could not entirely be separated from many watery parts, with which they were intimately mixed, they drew down a part of these also with them; and these could not mount again after the

surface of the earth was consolidated: they, therefore, surrounded the heavy first descending parts, in the same manner as these surround the central globe. Thus the entire body of the earth is composed most internally of a great burning globe: next which, is placed an heavy terrene substance, that encompasses it; round which also is circumfused a body of water. Upon this body of waters, the crust of earth on which we inhabit is placed: so that, according to him, the globe is composed of a number of coats, or shells, one within the other, all of different densities. The body of the earth being thus formed, the air, which is the lightest substance of all, surrounded its surface; and the beams of the sun darting through, produced that light which, we are told, first obeyed the Creator's command.

The whole œconomy of the creation being thus adjusted, it only remained to account for the risings and depressions on the surface of the earth, with the other seeming irregularities of its present appearance. The hills and vallies are considered by him as formed by their pressing upon the internal fluid, which sustains the outward shell of earth, with greater or less weight: those parts of the earth which are heaviest, sink into the subjacent fluid more

deeply, and become vallies: those that are lightest, rise higher upon the earth's surface, and are called mountains.

Such was the face of nature before the deluge; the earth was then more fertile and populous than it is at present; the life of man and animals was extended to ten times its present duration; and all these advantages arose from the superior heat of the central globe, which ever since has been cooling. As its heat was then in its full power, the genial principle was also much greater than at present; vegetation and animal encrease were carried on with more vigour; and all nature seemed teeming with the seeds of life. But these physical advantages were only productive of moral evil; the warmth which invigorated the body encreased the passions and appetites of the mind; and, as man became more powerful, he grew less innocent. It was found necessary to punish his depravity; and all living creatures, except the fishes, who living in a cold element were not subject to a similitude of guilt, were overwhelmed by the deluge in universal destruction.

This deluge, which simple believers are willing to ascribe to a miracle, philosophers have long been desirous to account for by

natural causes : they have proved that the earth could never supply from any reservoir towards its center, nor the atmosphere by any discharge from above, such a quantity of water as would cover the surface of the globe to a certain depth over the tops of our highest mountains. Where, therefore, was all this water to be found? Whiston has found enough, and more than a sufficiency, in the tail of a comet; for he seems to allot comets a very active part in the great operations of nature.

He calculates, with great seeming precision, the year, the month, and the day of the week on which this comet (which has paid the earth some visits since, though at a kinder distance) involved our globe in its tail. The tail he supposed to be a vaporous fluid substance, exhaled from the body of the comet, by the extreme heat of the sun, and encreasing in proportion as it approached that great luminary. It was in this that our globe was involved at the time of the deluge; and, as the earth still acted by its natural attraction, it drew to itself all the watery vapours which were in the comet's tail; and the internal waters being also at the same time let loose, in a very short space the tops of the highest mountains were laid under the deep.

The punishment of the deluge being thus compleated, and all the guilty destroyed, the earth, which had been broken by the eruption of the internal waters, was also enlarged by the same; so that upon the comet's recess, there was found room sufficient in the internal abyss for the recess of the superfluous waters; whither they all retired, and left the earth uncovered, but in some respects changed, particularly in its figure, which, from being round, was now become oblate. In this universal wreck of nature Noah survived, by a variety of happy causes, to re-people the earth, and to give birth to a race of men slow in believing ill-imagined theories of the earth.

After so many theories of the earth, which had been published, applauded, answered, and forgotten, Mr. Buffon ventured to add one more to the number. This philosopher was, in every respect, better qualified than any of his predecessors for such an attempt, being furnished with more materials, having a brighter imagination to find new proofs, and a better style to cloath them in. However, if one so ill qualified, as I am, may judge, this seems the weakest part of his admirable work; and I could wish, that he had been content with giving us facts instead of systems; that, in-

stead of being a reasoner, he had contented himself with being merely an historian.

He begins his system by making a distinction between the first part of it and the last; the one being founded only on conjecture, the other depending entirely upon actual observation. The latter part of his theory may, therefore, be true, though the former should be found erroneous.

The planets, says he, and the earth, among the number, might have been formerly (he only offers this as conjecture) a part of the body of the sun, and adherent to its substance. In this situation, a comet falling in upon that great body might have given it such a shock, and so shaken its whole frame, that some of its particles might have been driven off like streaming sparkles from red hot iron; and each of these streams of fire, small as they were in comparison of the sun, might have been large enough to have made an earth as great, nay many times greater than ours. So that in this manner the planets, together with the globe which we inhabit, might have been driven off from the body of the sun by an impulsive force: in this manner also they would continue to recede from it for ever, were they not drawn back by its superior power of attraction; and

thus, by the combination of the two motions, they are wheeled round in circles.

Being in this manner detached at a distance from the body of the sun, the planets, from having been at first globes of liquid fire, gradually became cool. The earth also having been dashed obliquely forward, received a rotatory motion upon its axis at the very instant of its formation, and this motion being greatest at the equator, the parts there acting against the force of gravity, they must have swollen out, and given the earth an oblate or flattened figure.

As to its internal substance, our globe having once belonged to the sun, it continues to be an uniform mass of melted matter, very probably vitrified in its primæval fusion. But its surface is very differently composed. Having been in the beginning heated to a degree equal to, if not greater than what comets are found to sustain; like them it had an atmosphere of vapours floating round it, and which cooling by degrees, condensed and subsided upon its surface. These vapours formed, according to their different densities, the earth, the water, and the air; the heavier parts falling first, and the lighter remaining still suspended.

Thus far our philosopher is, at least, as much a system maker as Whiston or Burnet; and, indeed, he fights his way with great perseverance and ingenuity through a thousand objections that naturally arise. Having, at last, got upon the earth; he supposes himself on firmer ground, and goes forward with greater security. Turning his attention to the present appearance of things upon this globe, he pronounces from the view that the whole earth was at first under water. This water he supposes to have been the lighter parts of its former evaporation, which, while the earthy particles sunk downwards by their natural gravity, floated on the surface, and covered it for a considerable space of time.

“The surface of the earth,” says he *, “must have been in the beginning much less solid than it is at present; and, consequently, the same causes, which at this day produce but very slight changes, must then, upon so complying a substance, have had very considerable effects. We have no reason to doubt but that it was then covered with the waters of the sea; and that those waters were above the tops of our highest mountains, since, even in such

* *Theorie de la Terre*, vol. 1, p. 111.

elevated situations, we find shells and other marine productions in very great abundance. It appears also that the sea continued for a considerable time upon the face of the earth : for as these layers of shells are found so very frequent at such great depths, and in such prodigious quantities, it seems impossible for these to have supported their numbers all alive at one time ; so that they must have been brought there by successive depositions. These shells also are found in the bodies of the hardest rocks, where they could not have been deposited, all at once, at the time of deluge, or at any such instant revolution ; since that would be to suppose, that all the rocks in which they are found, were, at that instant, in a state of dissolution ; which would be absurd to assert. The sea, therefore, deposited them wheresoever they are now to be found, and that by slow and successive degrees.

It will appear, also, that the sea covered the whole earth, from the appearance of its layers, which lying regularly one above the other, seem all to resemble the sediment formed at different times by the ocean. Hence, by the irregular force of its waves, and its currents driving the bottom into sand-banks, mountains must have been gradually formed within this universa^l

covering of waters; and these successively raising their heads above its surface, must, in time, have formed the highest ridges of mountains upon land, together with continents, islands, and low grounds, all in their turns. This opinion will receive additional weight by considering, that in those parts of the earth where the power of the ocean is greatest, the inequalities on the surface of the earth are highest: the ocean's power is greatest at the equator, where its winds and tides are most constant; and, in fact, the mountains at the equator are found to be higher than in any other part of the world. The sea, therefore, has produced the principal changes in our earth: rivers, volcanoes, earthquakes, storms, and rain, having made but slight alterations, and only such as have affected the globe to very inconsiderable depths.

This is but a very slight sketch of Mr. Buffon's Theory of the Earth; a theory which he has much more powerfully supported, than happily invented; and it would be needless to take up the reader's time from the pursuit of truth in the discussion of plausibilities. In fact, a thousand questions might be asked this most ingenious philosopher, which he would not find it easy to answer; but such is the lot of

humanity, that a single Goth can in one day destroy the fabric which Cæsars were employed an age in erecting. In fact, we might ask, how mountains, which are composed of the most compact and ponderous substances, should be the first whose parts the sea began to remove? We might ask, how fossil-wood is found deeper even than shells? which argues, that trees grew upon the places he supposes once to have been covered with the ocean. But we hope this excellent man is better employed than to think of gratifying the petulance of incredulity, by answering endless objections.

C H A P. V.

Of Fossil-shells, and other extraneous Fossils.

WE may affirm of Mr. Buffon, that which has been said of the chymists of old: though he may have failed in attaining his principal aim, of establishing a theory, yet he has brought together such a multitude of facts relative to the history of the earth, and the nature of its

fossil productions, that curiosity finds ample compensation even while it feels the want of conviction.

Before, therefore, I enter upon the description of those parts of the earth, which seem more naturally to fall within the subject, it will not be improper to give a short history of those animal productions that are found in such quantities, either upon its surface, or at different depths below it. They demand our curiosity, and, indeed, there is nothing in natural history that has afforded more scope for doubt, conjecture, and speculation. Whatever depths of the earth we examine, or at whatever distance within land we seek, we most commonly find a number of fossil-shells, which being compared with others from the sea, of known kinds, are found to be exactly of a similar shape and nature *. They are found at the very bottom of quarries and mines, in the most retired and inward parts of the most firm and solid rocks, upon the tops of even the highest hills and mountains, as well as in the valleys and plains: and this not in one country alone, but in all places where there is any digging for marble, chalk, or any

* Woodward's Essay towards a Natural History, p. 16.

other terrestrial matters, that are so compact as to fence off the external injuries of the air, and thus preserve these shells from decay.

These marine substances, so commonly diffused, and so generally to be met with, were for a long time considered by philosophers, as productions, not of the sea, but of the earth. "As we find that spars," said they, "always shoot into peculiar shapes, so these seeming snails, cockles, and muscle-shells, are only sportive forms that nature assumes amongst others of its mineral varieties: they have the shape of fish, indeed, but they have always been terrestrial substances §."

With this plausible solution mankind were for a long time content; but upon closer enquiry, they were obliged to alter their opinion. It was found that these shells had, in every respect, the properties of animal and not of mineral nature. They were found exactly of the same weight with their fellow shells upon shore. They answered all the chymical trials in the same manner as sea shells do. Their parts, when dissolved, had the same appearance to view, the same smell and taste. They had the

§ Lowth Abridgement, Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 426.

same effects in medicine when inwardly administered ; and, in a word, were so exactly conformable to marine bodies, that they had all the accidental concretions growing to them, (such as pearls, corals, and smaller shells) which are found in shells just gathered on the shore. They were, therefore, from these considerations, again given back to the sea ; but the wonder was, how to account for their coming so far from their own natural element upon land †.

As this naturally gave rise to many conjectures, it is not to be wondered that some among them have been very extraordinary. An Italian, quoted by Mr. Buffon, supposes them to have been deposited in the earth at the time of the crusades, by the pilgrims who returned from Jerusalem ; who gathering them upon the sea-shore, in their return carried them to their different places of habitation. But this conjecturer seems to have but a very inadequate idea of their numbers. At Touraine, in France, more than an hundred miles from the sea, there is a plain of about nine leagues long, and as many broad, from whence the peasants of the country supply themselves with marle for

† Woodward, p. 43.

manuring their lands. They seldom dig deeper than twenty feet, and the whole plain is composed of the same materials, which are shells of various kinds, without the smallest portion of earth between them. Here, then, is a large space, in which are deposited millions of tons of shells, which pilgrims could not have collected though their whole employment had been nothing else. England is furnished with its beds, which though not quite so extensive, yet are equally wonderful. * “Near Reading, in Berkshire, for many succeeding generations, a continued body of oyster-shells has been found through the whole circumference of five or six acres of ground. The foundation of these shells is an hard rocky chalk; and above this chalk, the oyster-shells lie in a bed of green sand, upon a level, as high as can possibly be judged, and about two feet thickness.” These shells are in their natural state, but they are found also petrified, and almost in equal abundance † in all the Alpine rocks, in the Pyrenees, on the hills of France, England, and Flanders. Even in all quar-

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 427.

† Buffon, vol. i. p. 407.

ries from whence marble is dug, if the rocks be split perpendicularly downwards, petrified shells, and other marine substances, will be plainly discerned.

“About a quarter of a mile from the river Medway †, in the county of Kent, after the taking off the coping of a piece of ground there, the workmen came to a blue marble, which continued for three feet and an half deep, or more, and then beneath appeared an hard floor, or pavement, composed of petrified shells crowded closely together. This layer was about an inch deep, and several yards over; and it could be walked upon as upon a beach. These stones, of which it was composed, (the describer supposes them to have always been stones) were either wreathed as snails, or bivalvular like cockles. The wreathed kinds were about the size of an hazle-nut, and were filled with a stony substance of the colour of marle; and they themselves, also, till they were washed, were of the same colour; but when cleaned, they appeared of the colour of bezoar, and of the same polish. After boiling in water they became whitish, and left a chalkiness upon the fingers.”

† Phil. Transf. p. 426.

In several parts of Asia and Africa, travellers have observed these shells in great abundance. In the mountains of Castravan, which lie above the city Barut, they quarry out a white stone, every part of which contains petrified fishes in great numbers, and of surprising diversity. They also seem to continue in such preservation, that their fins, scales, and all the minutest distinctions of their make, can be perfectly discerned *.

From all these instances we may conclude, that these fossils are very numerous; and, indeed, independent of their situation, they afford no small entertainment to observe them as preserved in the cabinets of the curious. The variety of their kinds is astonishing. Most of the sea shells which are known, and many others to which we are entirely strangers, are to be seen either in their natural state, or in various degrees of petrefaction †. In the place of some we have mere spar, or stone, exactly expressing all the lineaments of animals, as having been wholly formed from them. For it has happened, that the shells dissolving by very slow degrees, and the matter having nicely and exactly filled all the cavities within, this matter,

* Buffon, vol. i. p. 408. † Hill, p. 646.

after the shells have perished, has preserved exactly and regularly the whole print of their internal surface. Of these there are various kinds found in our pits; many of them resembling those of our own shores; and many others that are only to be found on the coasts of other countries. There are some shells resembling those that are never stranded upon our coasts *, but that always remain in the deep †: and many more there are which we can assimilate with no shells that are known amongst us. But we find not only shells in our pits, but also fishes and corals in great abundance; together with almost every sort of marine production.

It is extraordinary enough, however, that the common red coral, though so very frequent at sea, is scarce seen in the fossil world; nor is there any account of its having ever been met with. But to recompence for this, there are all the kinds of the white coral now known; and many other kinds of that substance with which we are unacquainted. Of animals there are various parts; the vertebræ of whales, and the mouths of lesser fishes; these,

* Littorales.

† Pelagii.

with teeth also of various kinds, are found in the cabinets of the curious; where they receive long Greek names, which it is neither the intention nor the province of this work to enumerate. Indeed, few readers would think themselves much improved, should I proceed with enumerating the various classes of the Coniethyodontes, Polyleptoginglimi, or the Orthoceratites. These names, which mean no great matter when they are explained, may serve to guide in the furnishing a cabinet; but they are of very little service in furnishing the page of instructive history.

From all these instances we see in what abundance these petrefactions are to be found; and, indeed, Mr. Buffon, to whose accounts we have added some, has not been sparing in the variety of his quotations, concerning the places where they are mostly to be found. However, I am surprized that he should have omitted the mention of one, which, in some measure, more than any of the rest, would have served to strengthen his theory. We are informed, by almost every traveller*, that has described the pyramids of Egypt, that one of them is entirely built of a kind of free-stone,

* Haffelquist, Sandys.

in which these petrified shells are found in great abundance. This being the case, it may be conjectured, as we have accounts of these pyramids among the earliest records of mankind, and of their being built so long before the age of Herodotus, who lived but fifteen hundred years after the flood, that even the Egyptian priests could tell neither the time nor the cause of their erection; I say it may be conjectured that they were erected but a short time after the flood. It is not very likely, therefore, that the marine substances found in one of them, had time to be formed into a part of the solid stone, either during the deluge, or immediately after it; and, consequently, their petrefaction must have been before that period. And this is the opinion Mr. Buffon has all along so strenuously endeavoured to maintain; having given specious reasons to prove, that such shells were laid in the beds where they are now found, not only before the deluge, but even antecedent to the formation of man, at the time when the whole earth, as he supposes, was buried beneath a covering of waters.

But while there are many reasons to persuade us that these extraneous fossils have been deposited by the sea, there is one fact that will

abundantly serve to convince us that the earth was habitable, if not inhabited, before these marine substances came to be thus deposited. For we find fossil trees, which no doubt once grew upon the earth, as deep, and as much in the body of solid rocks, as these shells are found to be. Some of these fallen trees also, have lain at least as long, if not longer, in the earth, than the shells as they have been found sunk deep in a marly substance, composed of decayed shells, and other marine productions. Mr. Buffon has proved that fossil shells could not have been deposited in such quantities all at once by the flood; and I think, from the above instance, it is pretty plain, that, howsoever they were deposited, the earth was covered with trees before their deposition; and, consequently, that the sea could not have made a very permanent stay. How then shall we account for these extraordinary appearances in nature? A suspension of all assent is certainly the first, although the most mortifying conduct. For my own part, were I to offer a conjecture, and all that has been said upon this subject is but conjecture, instead of supposing them to be the remains of animals belonging to the sea, I would consider them rather as bred in the numerous fresh-water lakes

that, in primæval times, covered the face of uncultivated nature. Some of these shells we know to belong to fresh waters: some can be assimilated to none of the marine shells now known*; why, therefore, may we not as well ascribe the production of all to fresh waters, where we do not find them, as we do that of the latter to the sea only, where we never find them? We know that lakes, and lands also, have produced animals that are now no longer existing, why, therefore, might not these fossil productions be among the number? I grant that this is making a very harsh supposition; but I cannot avoid thinking, that it is not attended with so many embarrassments as some of the former, and that it is much easier to believe that these shells were bred in fresh water, than that the sea had for a long time covered the tops of the highest mountains.

* Hill's Fossils, p. 641.

C H A P. VII.

Of the internal Structure of the Earth.

HAVING, in some measure, got free from the regions of conjecture, let us now proceed to a description of the earth as we find it by examination, and observe its internal composition, as far as it has been the subject of experience, or exposed to human enquiry. These enquiries, indeed, have been carried but to a very little depth below its surface, and even in that disquisition men have been conducted more by motives of avarice than of curiosity. The deepest mine, which is that at Cotteberg in Hungary ||, reaches not more than three thousand feet deep; but what proportion does that bear to the depth of the terrestrial globe, down to the centre, which is above four thousand miles? All, therefore, that has been said of the earth, to a deeper degree, is merely fabulous or conjectural: we may suppose with one, that it is a globe of glass *; with another, a sphere of heated iron †; with

|| Boyle, vol. iii. p. 240. * Buffon. † Whiston.

a third, a great mass of waters §; and with a fourth, one dreadful volcano †; but let us, at the same time, shew our consciousness, that all these are but suppositions.

Upon examining the earth, where it has been opened to any depth, the first thing that occurs, is the different layers or beds of which it is composed: these all lying horizontally one over the other like the leaves of a book, and each of them composed of materials that encrease in weight in proportion as they lie deeper. This is, in general, the disposition of the different materials where the earth seems to have remained unmolested; but this order is frequently inverted; and we cannot tell whether from its original formation, or from accidental causes. Of different substances, thus disposed, the far greatest part of our globe consists, from its surface downwards to the greatest depths we ever dig or mine †.

The first layer that is most commonly found at the surface, is that light coat of blackish mold, which is called, by some, garden earth. With this the earth is every where invested, unless it be washed off by rains, or removed by some other external violence. This seems to have been formed from animal and vegetable

§ Barnet.

† Kircher.

† Woodward, p. 9.

bodies decaying, and thus turning into its substance. It also serves again as a store-house, from whence animal and vegetable nature are renewed, and thus are all vital blessings continued with unceasing circulation. This earth, however, is not to be supposed entirely pure, but is mixed up with much stony and gravelly matter from the layers lying immediately beneath it. It generally happens, that the soil is fertile in proportion to the quantity that this putrified mold bears to the gravelly mixture; and as the former predominates, so far is the vegetation upon it more luxuriant. It is this external covering that supplies man with all the true riches he enjoys. He may bring up gold and jewels from greater depths; but they are merely the toys of a capricious being, things upon which he has placed an imaginary value, and for which fools alone part with the more substantial blessings of life. It is this earth, says Pliny †, that, like a kind mother, receives us at our birth, and sustains us when born. It is this alone, of all the elements around us, that is never found an enemy to man. The body of waters deluge him with rains, oppress him with hail, and drown him with inundations. The air rushes in storms,

† Plinii Naturalis Historia, lib. 2, cap. 63.

prepares the tempest, or lights up the volcano; but the earth, gentle and indulgent, ever subservient to the wants of man, spreads his walks with flowers, and his table with plenty; returns with interest every good committed to her care; and, though she produces the poison, she still supplies the antidote; though constantly seized more to furnish the luxuries of man than his necessities, yet, even to the last, she continues her kind indulgence, and, when life is over, she piously covers his remains in her bosom.

This external and fruitful layer which covers the earth, is, as was said, in a state of continual change. Vegetables, which are naturally fixed and rooted to the same place, receive their adventitious nourishment from the surrounding earth and water: animals, which change from place to place, are supported by these, or by each other. Both, however, having for a time enjoyed a life adapted to their nature, give back to the earth those spoils, which they had borrowed for a very short space, yet still to be quickened again into fresh existence. But the deposits they make are of very dissimilar kinds, and the earth is very differently enriched by their continuance. Those countries that have for a long time supported men and other animals, having been observed to become every day more bar-

ten, while, on the contrary, those desolate places, in which vegetables only are abundantly produced, are known to be possessors of amazing fertility. * “In regions which are uninhabited,” says Mr. Buffon, “where the forests are not cut down, and where animals do not feed upon the plants, the bed of vegetable earth is constantly encreasing. In all woods, and even in those which are often cut, there is a layer of earth of six or eight inches thick, which has been formed by the leaves, branches and bark, which fall and rot upon the ground. I have frequently observed on a Roman way that crosses Burgundy for a long extent, that there is a bed of black earth, of more than a foot thick, gathered over the stony pavement, on which several trees, of a very considerable size, are supported. This I have found to be nothing else than an earth formed by decayed leaves and branches, which have been converted by time into a black soil. Now as vegetables draw much more of their nourishment from the air and water than they do from the earth, it must follow, that in rotting upon the ground, they must give more to the soil than they have taken from it. Hence, therefore, in woods kept a long time without cutting, the soil below

* Buffon, vol. i. 353.

increases to a considerable depth; and such we actually find the soil in those American wilds where the forests have been undisturbed for ages. But it is otherwise where men and animals have long subsisted; for as they make a considerable consumption of wood and plants, both for firing and other uses, they take more from the earth than they return to it: it follows, therefore, that the bed of vegetable earth, in an inhabited country, must be always diminishing; and must, at length, resemble the soil of Arabia Petrea, and other provinces of the East, which having been long inhabited, are now become plains of salt and sand; the fixed salt always remaining while the other volatile parts have flown away."

If from this external surface we descend deeper, and view the earth cut perpendicularly downwards, either in the banks of great rivers, or steepy sea-shores; or, going still deeper, if we observe it in quarries or mines, we shall find its layers regularly disposed in their proper order. We must not expect, however, to find them of the same kind or thickness in every place, as they differ in different soils and situations. Sometimes marle is seen to be over sand, and sometimes under it. The most common disposition is, that under the first earth

is found gravel or sand, then clay or marle, then chalk or coal, marbles, oars, sands, gravels, and thus an alternation of these substances, each growing more dense as it sinks deeper. The clay, for instance, found at the depth of an hundred feet, is usually more heavy than that found not far from the surface. In a well which was dug at Amsterdam, to the depth of two hundred and thirty feet, the following substances were found in succession*: seven feet of vegetable earth, nine of turf, nine of soft clay, eight of sand, four of earth, ten of clay, four of earth, ten of sand, two of clay, four of white sand, one of soft earth, fourteen of sand, eight of clay mixed with sand, four of sea-sand mixed with shells, then an hundred and two feet of soft clay, and then thirty-one feet of sand.

In a well dug at Marly, to the depth of an hundred feet, Mr. Buffon gives us a still more exact enumeration of its layers of earth. Thirteen of a reddish gravel, two of gravel mingled with a vitrifiable sand, three of limon, two of marle, four of marly stone, five of marle in dust mixed with vitrifiable sand, six of very fine vitrifiable sand, three of earthy marle, three of hard marle, one of gravel, one of

* Varenius, as quoted by Mr. Buffon, p. 358.

eglantine, a stone of the hardness and grain of marble, one of gravelly marle, one of stony marle, one of a coarser kind of stony marle, two of a coarser kind still, one of vitrifiable sand mixed with fossil shells, two of fine gravel, three of stony marle, one of coarse powdered marle, one of stone, calcinable like marble, three of grey sand, two of white sand, one of red sand streaked with white, eight of grey sand with shells, three of very fine sand, three of gres, four of red sand streaked with white, three of white sand, and fifteen of reddish vitrifiable sand."

In this manner the earth is every where found in beds over beds; and, what is still remarkable, each of them, as far as it extends, always maintains exactly the same thickness. It is found also, that, as we proceed to considerable depths, every layer grows thicker. Thus in the adduced instances we might have observed, that the last layer was fifteen feet thick, while most of the others were not above eight, and this might have gone much deeper, for aught we can tell, as before they got through it the workmen ceased digging.

These layers are sometimes very extensive, and often are found to obtain over a space of some leagues in circumference. But it must

not be supposed that they are uniformly continued over the whole globe without any interruption: on the contrary, they are ever, at small intervals, cracked through as it were by perpendicular fissures; the earth resembling, in this respect, the muddy bottom of a pond, from whence the water has been dried off by the sun, and thus gaping in several chinks, which descend in a direction perpendicular to its surface. These fissures are many times found empty, but oftener closed up with adventitious substances, that the rain, or some other accidental causes, have conveyed to fill their cavities. Their openings are not less different than their contents, some being not above half an inch wide, some a foot, and some several hundred yards asunder. These last form those dreadful chasms that are to be found in the Alps, at the edge of which the traveller stands dreading to look down at the immeasurable gulph below. These amazing clefts are well known to such as have past these mountains, where a chasm frequently presents itself several hundred feet deep, and as many over, at the edge of which the way lies. It often happens also, that the road leads along the bottom, and then the spectator observes on each side frightful precipices several hundred

yards above him; the sides of which tally so exactly with each other, that they evidently seem torn asunder.

But these chasms to be found in the Alps, are nothing to what Ovalle tells us are to be seen in the Andes. These amazing mountains, in comparison of which the former are but little hills, have their fissures in proportion to their greatness. In some places they are a mile wide, and deep in proportion; and there are some others, that running underground, in extent resemble a province.

Of this kind also is that cavern called Elden-hole, in Derbyshire; which, Dr. Plot tells us, was founded by a line of eight and twenty hundred feet, without finding the bottom, or meeting with water: and yet the mouth at the top is not above forty yards over*. This immeasurable cavern runs perpendicularly downward; and the sides of it seem to tally so plainly as to shew that they once were united. Those who come to visit the place, generally procure stones to be thrown into its mouth; and these are heard for several minutes, falling and striking against the sides of the cavern, producing a sound that resembles distant thunder, dying away as the stone goes deeper.

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 370.

Of this kind also is that dreadful cavern described by Ælian; his account of which the reader may not have met with †. “In the country of the Arrian Indians, is to be seen an amazing chasm, which is called, The Gulph of Pluto. The depth, and the recesses of this horrid place, are as extensive as they are unknown. Neither the natives, nor the curious who visit it, are able to tell how it first was made, or to what depths it descends. The Indians continually drive thither great multitudes of animals, more than three thousand at a time, of different kinds, sheep, horses and goats; and, with an absurd superstition, force them into the cavity, from whence they never return. Their several sounds, however, are heard as they descend; the bleating of sheep, the lowing of oxen, and the neighing of horses, issuing up to the mouth of the cavern. Nor do these sounds cease, as the place is continually furnished with a fresh supply.”

There are many more of these dreadful perpendicular fissures in different parts of the earth; with accounts of which, Kircher, Gaffarellus, and others who have given histories of the wonders of the subterranean world, abundantly supply us. The generality of readers, however, will consider them with less astonishment, when they are informed of their being common all

† Æliani Var. Hist. lib. 16, cap. 16.

over the earth: that in every field, in every quarry, these perpendicular fissures are to be found; either still gaping, or filled with matter that has accidentally closed their interstices. The inattentive spectator neglects the enquiry, but their being common is partly the cause that excites the philosopher's attention to them; the irregularities of nature he is often content to let pass unexamined; but when a constant and a common appearance presents itself, every return of the object is a fresh call to his curiosity; and the chink in the next quarry becomes as great a matter of wonder as the chasm in Elden-hole. Philosophers have long, therefore, endeavoured to find out the cause of these perpendicular fissures, which our own countrymen, Woodward and Ray, were the first that found to be so common and universal. Mr. Buffon supposes them to be cracks made by the sun, in drying up the earth immediately after its emerfion from the deep. The heat of the sun is very probably a principal cause; but it is not right to ascribe to one only, what we find may be the result of many. Earthquakes, severe frosts, bursting waters, and storms tearing up the roots of trees, have, in our own times, produced them: and to this variety of causes, we must, at present, be content to assign those that have happened before we had opportunities for observation.

C H A P. VIII.

Of Caves and subterraneous Passages that sink,
but not perpendicularly, into the Earth.

IN surveying the subterranean wonders of the globe, besides those fissures that descend perpendicularly downwards, we frequently find others that descend but a little way, and then spread themselves often to a great extent below the surface. Many of these caverns, it must be confessed, may be the production of art and human industry; retreats made to protect the oppressed, or shelter the spoiler. The famous labyrinth of Candia, for instance, is supposed to be entirely the work of art. Mr. Tournefort assures us, that it bears the impression of human industry, and that great pains have been bestowed upon its formation. The stone-quarry of Maestricht is evidently made by labour: carts enter at its mouth, and load within, then return and discharge their freight into boats that lie on the brink of the river Maese. This quarry is so large, that forty thousand people may take shelter in it: and it in general serves for this purpose, when armies march that way; becoming then an impregnable retreat to the people

that live thereabout. Nothing can be more beautiful than this cavern, when lighted up with torches; for there are thousands of square pillars, in large level walks, about twenty feet high; and all wrought with much neatness and regularity. In this vast grotto there is very little rubbish; which shews both the goodness of the stone, and the carefulness of the workmen. To add to its beauty, there also are in various parts of it, little pools of water, for the convenience of the men and cattle. It is remarkable also, that no droppings are seen to fall from the roof, nor are the walks any way wet under foot, except in cases of great rains, where the water gets in by the air shafts. The Salt mines in Poland are still more spacious than these. Some of the catacombs, both in Egypt and Italy, are said to be very extensive. But no part of the world has a greater number of artificial caverns than Spain, which were made to serve as retreats to the Christians, against the fury of the Moors, when the latter conquered that country. However, an account of the works of art, does not properly belong to a natural history. It will be enough to observe, that though caverns be found in every country, far the greatest part of them have been fashioned only by the hand of Nature. Their size is found beyond the

power of man to have effected; and their forms but ill adapted to the conveniences of an human habitation. In some places, indeed, we find mankind still make use of them as houses; particularly in those countries where the climate is very severe*; but in general they are deserted by every race of meaner animals, except the bat; these nocturnal solitary creatures are usually the only inhabitants; and these only in such whose descent is sloping, or, at least, not directly perpendicular.

There is scarce a country in the world without its natural caverns; and many new ones are discovered every day. Of those in England, Oakey-hole, The Devil's-hole, and Penpark-hole, have been often described. The former, which lies on the south side of Mendip-hills†, within a mile of the town of Wells, is much resorted to by travellers. To conceive a just idea of this, we must imagine a precipice of more than an hundred yards high, on the side of a mountain which shelves away a mile above it. In this is an opening not very large, into which you enter, going along upon a rocky uneven pavement, sometimes ascending, and sometimes descending. The roof of it, as you advance, grows higher; and, in some places, is fifty feet

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 368. † Ibid.

from the floor. In some places, however, it is so low that a man must stoop to pass. It extends itself, in length, about two hundred yards; and from every part of the roof, and the floor, there are formed sparry concretions of various figures, that by strong imaginations have been likened to men, lions, and organs. At the farthest part of this cavern rises a stream of water, well stored with fish, large enough to turn a mill, and which discharges itself near the entrance.

Penpark-hole, in Gloucestershire, is almost as remarkable as the former. Captain Sturmeý descended into this by a rope, twenty-five fathoms perpendicular, and at the bottom found a very large vault in the shape of an horse-shoe. The floors consisted of a kind of white stone enamelled with lead ore, and the pendent rocks were glazed with spar. Walking forward on this stony pavement, for some time, he came to a great river, twenty fathoms broad, and eight fathoms deep; and having been informed that it ebbed and flowed with the sea, he remained in this gloomy abode for five hours, to make an exact observation. He did not find, however, any alteration whatsoever in its appearance. But his curiosity was ill requited; for it cost this unfortunate gentleman his life: immediately

after his return, he was seized with an unusual and violent head-ach, which threw him into a fever, of which he died soon after.

But of all the subterraneous caverns now known, the grotto of Antiparos is the most remarkable, as well for its extent, as for the beauty of its sparry incrustations. This celebrated cavern was first discovered by one Magni, an Italian traveller, about an hundred years ago, at Antiparos, an inconsiderable island of the Archipelago*. The account he gives of it is long and inflated, but upon the whole amusing. "Having been informed," says he, "by the natives of Paros, that in the little island of Antiparos, which lies about two miles from the former, of a gigantic statue that was to be seen at the mouth of a cavern in that place, it was resolved that we (the French consul and himself) should pay it a visit. In pursuance of this resolution, after we had landed on the island, and walked about four miles thro' the midst of beautiful plains, and sloping woodlands, we at length came to a little hill, on the side of which yawned a most horrid cavern, that with its gloom at first struck us with terror, and almost repress'd curiosity. Recovering

* Kircher Mund. sub. 122. I have translated a part of Kircher's description, rather than Tournefort's, as the latter was written to support an hypothesis.

the first surprize, however, we entered boldly ; and had not proceeded above twenty paces, when the supposed statue of the giant presented itself to our view. We quickly perceived, that what the ignorant natives had been terrified at as a giant, was nothing more than a sparry concretion, formed by the water dropping from the roof of the cave, and by degrees hardening into a figure that their fears had formed into a monster. Incited by this extraordinary appearance, we were induced to proceed still farther, in quest of new adventures in this subterranean abode. As we proceeded, new wonders offered themselves; the spars, formed into trees and shrubs, presented a kind of petrified grove; some white, some green; and all receding in due perspective. They struck us with the more amazement, as we knew them to be mere productions of Nature, who, hitherto in solitude, had, in her playful moments, dressed the scene, as if for her own amusement.

“ But we had as yet seen but a few of the wonders of the place; and we were introduced as yet only into the portico of this amazing temple. In one corner of this half illuminated recess, there appeared an opening of about three feet wide, which seemed to lead to a place to-

tally dark, and that one of the natives assured us contained nothing more than a reservoir of water. Upon this we tried, by throwing down some stones, which rumbling along the sides of the descent for some time, the sound seemed at last quashed in a bed of water. In order, however, to be more certain, we sent in a Levantine mariner, who, by the promise of a good reward, with a flambeaux in his hand, ventured into this narrow aperture. After continuing within it for about a quarter of an hour, he returned, carrying some beautiful pieces of white spar in his hand, which art could neither imitate nor equal. Upon being informed by him that the place was full of these beautiful incrustations, I ventured in once more with him, for about fifty paces, anxiously and cautiously descending by a steep and dangerous way. Finding, however, that we came to a precipice which led into a spacious amphitheatre, if I may so call it, still deeper than any other part, we returned, and being provided with a ladder, flambeaux, and other things to expedite our descent, our whole company, man by man, ventured into the same opening, and descending one after another, we at last saw ourselves all together in the most magnificent part of the cavern.

“ Our candles being now all lighted up, and the whole place completely illuminated, never could the eye be presented with a more glittering, or a more magnificent scene. The roof all hung with solid icicles, transparent as glass, yet solid as marble. The eye could scarce reach the lofty and noble cieling; the sides were regularly formed with spars; and the whole presented the idea of a magnificent theatre, illuminated with an immense profusion of lights. The floor consisted of solid marble; and in several places, magnificent columns, thrones, altars, and other objects appeared, as if nature had designed to mock the curiosities of art. Our voices, upon speaking or singing, were redoubled to an astonishing loudness; and upon the firing of a gun, the noise and reverberations were almost deafening. In the midst of this grand amphitheatre rose a concretion of about fifteen feet high, that, in some measure, resembled an altar; from which, taking the hint, we caused mass to be celebrated there. The beautiful columns that shot up round the altar, appeared like candlesticks; and many other natural objects represented the customary ornaments of this sacrament.

“ Below even this spacious grotto, there seemed another cavern; down which I ventured with

my former mariner, and descended about fifty paces by means of a rope. I at last arrived at a small spot of level ground, where the bottom appeared different from that of the amphitheatre, being composed of soft clay, yielding to the pressure, and in which I thrust a stick to about six feet deep. In this, however, as above, numbers of the most beautiful chrystals were formed; one of which, particularly, resembled a table. Upon our egress from this amazing cavern, we perceived a Greek inscription upon a rock at the mouth, but so obliterated by time, that we could not read it. It seemed to import that one Antipater, in the time of Alexander, had come thither; but whether he penetrated into the depths of the cavern, he does not think fit to inform us."

Such is the account of this beautiful scene, as communicated in a letter to Kircher. We have another, and a more copious description of it by Tournefort, which is in every body's hands; but I have given the above, both because it was communicated by the first discoverer, and because it is a simple narrative of facts, without any reasoning upon them. According to Tournefort's account, indeed, we might conclude, from the rapid growth of the spars in this grotto, that it must every year be growing

narrower, and that it must, in time, be choaked up with them entirely ; but no such thing has happened hitherto, and the grotto at this day continues as spacious as we ever knew it.

This is not the place for an enquiry into the seeming vegetation of those stony substances with which this and almost every cavern are incrustated. It is enough to observe, in general, that they are formed by an accumulation of that little gritty matter which is carried thither by the waters, and which in time acquires the hardness of marble. What in this place more imports us to know is, how these amazing hollows in the earth came to be formed. And I think, in the three instances above-mentioned, it is pretty evident, that their excavation has been owing to waters. These finding subterraneous passages under the earth, and by long degrees hollowing the beds in which they flowed, the ground above them has sunk down closer to their surface, leaving the upper layers of the earth or stone still suspended. The ground that sinks upon the face of the waters forming the floor of the cavern ; the ground, or rock that keeps suspended, forming the roof : and, indeed, there are but few of these caverns found without water, either within them, or near enough to point out their formation.

C H A P. VIII.

Of Mines, Damps, and Mineral Vapours.

THE caverns, which we have been describing, generally carry us but a very little way below the surface of the earth. Two hundred feet, at the utmost, is as much as the lowest of them is found to sink. The perpendicular fissures run much deeper; but few persons have been bold enough to venture down to their deepest recesses; and some few who have tried, have been able to bring back no tidings of the place, for unfortunately they left their lives below. The excavations of art have conducted us much further into the bowels of the globe. Some mines in Hungary are known to be a thousand yards perpendicularly downwards; and I have been informed, by good authority, of a coal mine in the north of England, an hundred yards deeper still.

It is beside our present purpose to enquire into the peculiar construction and contrivance of these, which more properly belongs to the history of fossils. It will be sufficient to observe in this place, that as we descend into the

mines, the various layers of earth are seen, as we have already described them; and in some of these are always found the metals or minerals, for which the mine has been dug. Thus frequently gold is found dispersed and mixed with clay and gravel *; sometimes it is mingled with other metallic bodies, stones, or bitumens; and † sometimes united with that most obstinate of all substances, platina, from which scarce any art can separate it. Silver is sometimes found quite pure ‡, sometimes mixed with other substances and minerals. Copper is found in beds mixed with various substances, marbles, sulphurs, and pyrites. Tin, the ore of which is heavier than that of any other metal, is generally found mixed with every kind of matter: § lead is also equally common; and iron we well know can be extracted from all the substances upon earth.

The variety of substances which are thus found in the bowels of the earth, in their native state, have a very different appearance from what they are afterwards taught to assume by human industry. The richest metals are very often less glittering and splendid than the most

* Ulloa, vol. ii. p. 470.

† Ulloa, *ibid.*

‡ Macquer's Chymistry, vol. i. p. 316.

§ Hill's Fossils, p. 628.

useless marcasites, and the basest ores are in general the most beautiful to the eye.

This variety of substances, which compose the internal parts of our globe, is productive of equal varieties, both above and below its surface. The combination of the different minerals with each other, the heats which arise from their mixture, the vapours they diffuse, the fires which they generate, or the colds which they sometimes produce, are all either noxious or salutary to man; so that in this great laboratory of nature, a thousand benefits and calamities are forging, of which we are wholly unconscious; and it is happy for us that we are so.

* Upon our descent into mines of considerable depth, the cold seems to encrease from the mouth as we descend; but after passing very low down, we begin, by degrees, to come into a warmer air, which sensibly grows hotter as we go deeper, till, at last, the labourers can scarce bear any covering as they continue working.

This difference in the air was supposed by Boyle to proceed from magazines of fire that lay nearer the centre, and that diffused their heat to the adjacent regions. But we now

† Boyle, vol. iii. p. 232.

know that it may be ascribed to more obvious causes. In some mines, the composition of the earth all around is of such a nature, that upon the admission of water or air, it frequently becomes hot, and often bursts out into eruptions. Beside this, as the external air cannot readily reach the bottom, or be renewed there, an observable heat is perceived below, without the necessity of recurring to the central heat for an explanation.

Hence, therefore, there are two principal causes of the warmth at the bottom of mines : the heat of the substances of which the sides are composed ; and the want of renovation in the air below. Any sulphureous substance mixed with iron, produces a very great heat, by the admission of water. If, for instance, a quantity of sulphur be mixed with a proportionable share of iron filings, and both kneaded together into a soft paste, with water, they will soon grow hot, and at last produce a flame. This experiment, produced by art, is very commonly effected within the bowels of the earth by nature. Sulphurs and irons are intimately blended together, and want only the mixture of water or air to excite their heat ; and this, when once raised, is communicated to all bodies that lie within the sphere of their operation. Those beautiful

minerals, called marcasites and pyrites, are often of this composition; and wherever they are found, either by imbibing the moisture of the air, or having been by any means combined with water, they render the mine considerably hot*.

The want of fresh air, also, at these depths, is, as we have said, another reason for their being found much hotter. Indeed, without the assistance of art, the bottom of most mines would, from this cause, be insupportable. To remedy this inconvenience, the miners are often obliged to sink, at some convenient distance from the mouth of the pit where they are at work, another pit, which joins the former below, and which, in Derbyshire, is called an air-shaft. Through this the air circulates; and thus the workmen are enabled to breathe freely at the bottom of the place; which becomes, as Mr. Boyle affirms, very commodious for respiration; and also very temperate as to heat and cold†. Mr. Locke, however, who has left us an account of the Mendip mines, seems to present a different picture. “The descent into these is exceeding difficult and dangerous; for they are not sunk like wells, perpendicularly,

* Kircher Mund. Subt. vol. ii. p. 216.

† Boyle, vol. iii. p. 238.

but as the crannies of the rocks happen to run. The constant method is to swing down by a rope, placed under the arms, and clamber along, by applying both feet and hands to the sides of the narrow passage. The air is conveyed into them through a little passage that runs along the sides from the top, where they set up some turfs, on the lee-side of the hole, to catch and force it down. These turfs being removed to the windy side, or laid over the mouth of the hole, the miners below presently want breath, and faint; and if sweet smelling flowers chance to be placed there, they immediately lose their fragrancy, and stink like carrion." An air so very putrifying can never be very commodious for respiration.

Indeed, if we examine the complexion of most miners, we shall be very well able to form a judgment of the unwholsomeness of the place where they are confined. Their pale and fallow looks shew how much the air is damaged by passing through those deep and winding ways, that are rendered humid by damps, or warmed with noxious exhalations. But although every mine is unwholsome, all are not equally so. Coal-mines are generally less noxious than those of tin; tin than those of copper; but of all, none are so dreadfully destructive as those of quicksilver.

At the mines near the village of Idra, nothing can adequately describe the deplorable infirmities of such as fill the hospital there: emaciated and crippled, every limb contracted or convulsed, and some in a manner transpiring quicksilver at every pore. There was one man, says Dr. Pope *, who was not in the mines above half a year, and yet whose body was so impregnated with this mineral, that putting a piece of brass money in his mouth, or rubbing it between his fingers, it immediately became as white as if it had been washed over with quicksilver. In this manner all the workmen are killed, sooner or later; first becoming paralytic, and then dying consumptive: and all this they sustain for the trifling reward of seven-pence a day.

But these metallic mines are not so noxious from their own vapours, as from those of the substances with which the ores are usually united, such as arsenic, cinnabar, bitumen, or vitriol. From the fumes of these, variously combined, and kept enclosed, are produced those various damps that put on so many dreadful forms, and are usually so fatal. Sometimes those noxious vapours are perceived by the delightful fragrance of their smell §, somewhat resembling the pea-blossom in bloom, from whence

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 578. § Ibid. p. 375.

one kind of damp has its name. The miners are not deceived, however, by its flattering appearances; but as they thus have timely notice of its coming, they avoid it while it continues, which is generally during the whole summer season. Another shews its approach by the burning of the candles, which seem to collect their flame into a globe of light, and thus gradually lessen, till they are quite extinguished. From this also, the miners frequently escape; however, such as have the misfortune to be caught in it, either swoon away, and are suffocated, or slowly recover in excessive agonies. Here is also a third, called the fulminating damp, much more dangerous than either of the former, as it strikes down all before it, like a flash of gunpowder, without giving any warning of its approach. But there is still another, more deadly than all the rest, which is found in those places where the vapour has been long confined, and has been, by some accident, set free. The air rushing out from thence, always goes upon deadly errands; and scarce any escape to describe the symptoms of its operations.

Some colliers in Scotland, working near an old mine that had been long closed up, happened inadvertently to open an hole into it, from the pit where they were then employed,

By great good fortune, they at that time perceived their error, and instantly fled for their lives. The next day, however, they were resolved to renew their work in the same pit, and eight of them ventured down, without any great apprehensions; but they had scarce got to the bottom of the stairs that led to the pit, but coming within the vapour, they all instantly dropped down dead, as if they had been shot. Amongst these unfortunate poor men, there was one whose wife was informed that he was stifled in the mine; and as he happened to be next the entrance, she so far ventured down as to see where he lay. As she approached the place, the sight of her husband inspired her with a desire to rescue him, if possible, from that dreadful situation; though a little reflection might have shewn her it was then too late. But nothing could deter her; she ventured forward, and had scarce touched him with her hand, when the damp prevailed, and the misguided, but faithful creature, fell dead by his side.

Thus, the vapours found beneath the surface of the earth, are very various in their effects upon the constitution: and they are not less in their appearances. There are many kinds that seemingly are no way prejudicial to health, but in which the workmen breathe freely; and yet

in these, if a lighted candle be introduced, they immediately take fire, and the whole cavern at once becomes one furnace of flame. In mines, therefore, subject to damp of this kind, they are obliged to have recourse to a very peculiar contrivance to supply sufficient light for their operations. This is by a great wheel; the circumference of which is beset with flints, which striking against steels placed for that purpose at the extremity, a stream of fire is produced, which affords light enough; and yet which does not set fire to the mineral vapour.

Of this kind are the vapours of the mines about Bristol: on the contrary, in other mines, a single spark struck out from the collision of flint and steel, would set the whole shaft in a flame. In such, therefore, every precaution is used to avoid a collision; the workmen making use only of wooden instruments in digging; and being cautious before they enter the mine, to take out even the nails from their shoes. Whence this strange difference should arise, that the vapours of some mines catch fire with a spark, and others only with a flame, is a question that we must be content to leave in obscurity, till we know more of the nature both of mineral vapour and of fire. This only we may observe, that gunpowder will readily fire

with a spark, but not with the flame of a candle: on the other hand, spirits of wine will flame with a candle, but not with a spark; but even here the cause of this difference, as yet, remains a secret.

As from this account of mines, it appears that the internal parts of the globe are filled with vapours of various kinds, it is not surprizing, that they should at different times reach the surface, and there put on various appearances. In fact, much of the salubrity, and much of the unwholsomeness of climates and soils, is to be ascribed to these vapours, which make their way from the bowels of the earth upwards, and refresh or taint the air with their exhalations. Salt mines being naturally cold*, send forth a degree of coldness to the external air, to comfort and refresh it: on the contrary, metallic mines are known, not only to warm it with their exhalations, but often to destroy all kinds of vegetation by their volatile corrosive fumes. In some mines dense vapours are plainly perceived issuing from their mouths, and sensibly warm to the touch. In some places, neither snow nor ice will continue on the ground that covers a mine; and over others

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 523.

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the fields are found destitute of verdure †. The inhabitants, also, are rendered dreadfully sensible of these subterraneous exhalations, being affected with such a variety of evils proceeding entirely from this cause, that books have been professedly written upon this class of disorders.

Nor are these vapours which thus escape to the surface of the earth, entirely unconfined; for they are frequently, in a manner, circumscribed to a spot: the grotto Del Cane, near Naples, is an instance of this; the noxious effects of which have made that cavern so very famous. This grotto, which has so much employed the attention of travellers, lies within four miles of Naples, and is situated near a large lake of clear and wholesome water ‡. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the landscape which this lake affords; being surrounded with hills covered with forests of the most beautiful verdure, and the whole bearing a kind of amphitheatrical appearance. However, this region, beautiful as it appears, is almost entirely uninhabited; the few peasants that necessity compels to reside there, looking quite consumptive and ghastly, from the poisonous exhalations.

† Boyle, vol. iii. p. 238.

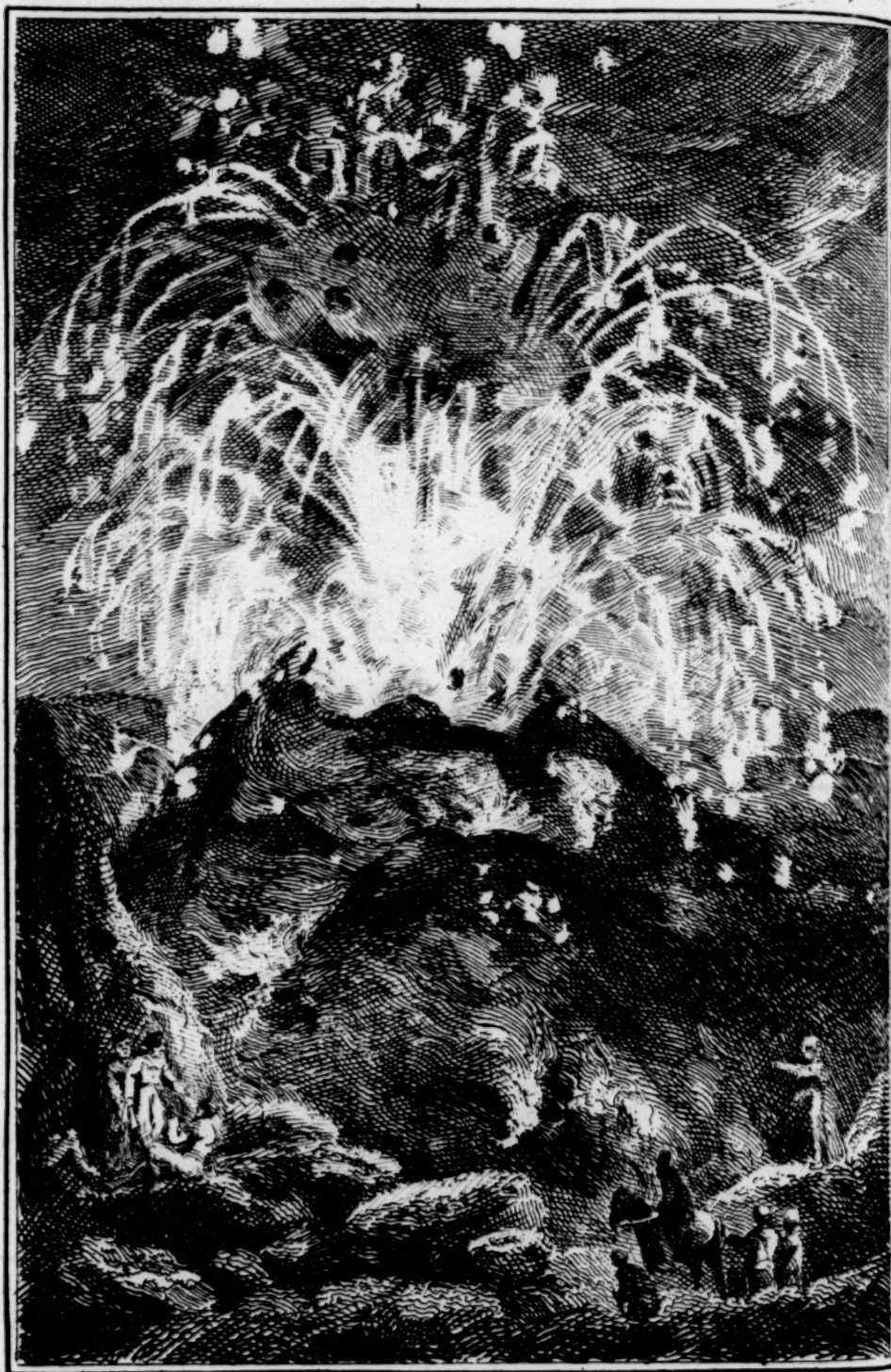
‡ Kircher Mund. Subt. vol. i. p. 191.

tions that rise from the earth. The famous grotto lies on the side of an hill, near which place a peasant resides, who keeps a number of dogs for the purpose of shewing the experiment to the curious. These poor animals always seem perfectly sensible of the approach of a stranger, and endeavour to get out of the way. However, their attempts being perceived, they are taken and brought to the grotto; the noxious effects of which they have so frequently experienced. Upon entering this place, which is a little cave, or hole rather, dug into the hill, about eight feet high and twelve feet long, the observer can see no visible marks of its pestilential vapour; only to about a foot from the bottom, the wall seems to be tinged with a colour resembling that which is given by stagnant waters. When the dog, this poor philosophical martyr, as some have called him, is held above this mark, he does not seem to feel the smallest inconvenience; but when his head is thrust down lower, he struggles to get free for a little; but in the space of four or five minutes he seems to lose all sensation, and is taken out seemingly without life. Being plunged in the neighbouring lake, he quickly recovers, and is permitted

to run home seemingly without the smallest injury.

This vapour, which thus for a time suffocates, is of the humid kind, as it extinguishes a torch, and sullies a looking-glass ; but there are other vapours perfectly inflammable, and that only require the approach of a candle to set them blazing. Of this kind was the burning well at Brosely, which is now stopped up ; the vapour of which, when a candle was brought within about a foot of the surface of the water, caught flame like spirits of wine, and continued blazing for several hours after. Of this kind, also, are the perpetual fires in the kingdom of Persia. In that province, where the worshippers of fire hold their chief mysteries, the whole surface of the earth, for some extent, seems impregnated with inflammable vapours. A reed stuck into the ground continues to burn like a flambeaux; an hole made beneath the surface of the earth, instantly becomes a furnace answering all the purposes of a culinary fire. There they make lime by merely burying the stones in the earth, and watch with veneration the appearances of a flame that has not been extinguished for times immemorial. How different are men in various

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A Volcano.

E. Martin sculp.

climates! This deluded people worship these vapours as a deity, which in other parts of the world are considered as one of the greatest evils.

C H A P. IX.

Of Volcanoes and Earthquakes.

MINES and caverns, as we have said, reach but a very little way under the surface of the earth, and we have hitherto had no opportunities of exploring further. Without all doubt the wonders that are still unknown surpass those that have been represented, as there are depths of thousands of miles which are hidden from our enquiry. The only tidings we have from those unfathomable regions are by means of volcanoes, those burning mountains that seem to discharge their materials from the lowest abysses of the earth †. A volcano may be considered as a cannon of immense size, the mouth of which is often near two miles in circumference. From this dreadful aperture are discharged torrents of flame and sulphur, and

† Buffon, vol. i. p. 291.



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rivers of melted metal. Whole clouds of smoke and ashes, with rocks of enormous size, are discharged to many miles distance; so that the force of the most powerful artillery, is but as a breeze agitating a feather in comparison. In the deluge of fire and melted matter which runs down the sides of the mountain, whole cities are sometimes swallowed up and consumed. Those rivers of liquid fire are sometimes two hundred feet deep; and, when they harden, frequently form considerable hills. Nor is the danger of these confined to the eruption only: but the force of the internal fire struggling for vent, frequently produces earthquakes through the whole region where the volcano is situated. So dreadful have been these appearances, that men's terrors have added new horrors to the scene, and they have regarded as prodigies, what we know to be the result of natural causes. Some philosophers have considered them as vents communicating with the fires of the center, and the ignorant as the mouths of hell itself. Astonishment produces fear, and fear superstition: the inhabitants of Iceland believe the bellowings of Hecla are nothing else but the cries of the damned, and that its eruptions are contrived to encrease their tortures.

But if we regard this astonishing scene of terror with a more tranquil and inquisitive eye, we shall find that these conflagrations are produced by very obvious and natural causes. We have already been apprized of the various mineral substances in the bosom of the earth, and their aptness to burst out into flames. Marcasites and pyrites, in particular, by being humefied with water, or air, contract this heat, and often endeavour to expand with irresistible explosion. These, therefore, being lodged in the depths of the earth, or in the bosom of mountains, and being either washed by the accidental influx of waters below, or fanned by air, insinuating itself through perpendicular fissures from above, take fire at first by only heaving in earthquakes, but at length by bursting through every obstacle, and making their dreadful discharge in a volcano.

These volcanoes are found in all parts of the earth: in Europe there are three that are very remarkable; *Ætna* in Sicily, *Vesuvius* in Italy, and *Hecla* in Iceland. *Ætna* has been a volcano for ages immemorial. Its eruptions are very violent, and its discharge has been known to cover the earth sixty-eight feet deep. In the year 1537, an eruption of this mountain produced an earthquake through the whole island,

for twelve days, overturned many houses, and at last formed a new aperture which overwhelmed all within five leagues round. The cinders thrown up were driven even into Italy, and its burnings were seen at Malta at the distance of sixty leagues. There is nothing more awful, says Kircher, than the eruptions of this mountain, nor nothing more dangerous than attempting to examine its appearances, even long after the eruption has ceased. As we attempt to clamber up its steepy sides, every step we take upward, the feet sink back half way. Upon arriving near the summit, ashes and snow, with an ill assorted conjunction, present nothing but objects of desolation. Nor is this the worst, for, as all places are covered over, many caverns are entirely hidden from the sight, into which, if the enquirer happens to fall, he sinks to the bottom, and meets inevitable destruction. Upon coming to the edge of the great crater, nothing can sufficiently represent the tremendous magnificence of the scene. A gulph two miles over, and so deep that no bottom can be seen; on the sides pyramidical rocks starting out between apertures that emit smoke and flame; all this accompanied with a sound that never ceases, louder than thunder, strikes the bold with horror, and the religious with vene-

ration for him that has power to controule its burnings.

In the descriptions of Vesuvius, or Hecla, we shall find scarce any thing but a repetition of the same terrible objects, but rather lessened, as these mountains are not so large as the former. The crater of Vesuvius is but a mile across, according to the same author; whereas that of *Ætna* is two. On this particular, however, we must place no dependance, as these caverns every day alter; being lessened by the mountains sinking in at one eruption, and enlarged by the fury of another. It is not one of the least remarkable particulars respecting Vesuvius, that Pliny the naturalist was suffocated in one of its eruptions; for his curiosity impelling him too near, he found himself involved in smoke and cinders when it was too late to retire; and his companions hardly escaped to give an account of the misfortune. It was in that dreadful eruption that the city of *Herculaneum* was overwhelmed; the ruins of which have been lately discovered at sixty feet distance below the surface, and, what is still more remarkable, forty feet below the bed of the sea. One of the most remarkable eruptions of this mountain was in the year 1707, which is finely described by Valetta, a part of

whose description I shall beg leave to translate.

“ Towards the latter end of summer, in the year 1707, the mount Vesuvius, that had for a long time been silent, now began to give some signs of commotion. Little more than internal murmurs at first were heard, that seemed to contend within the lowest depths of the mountain; no flame, nor even any smoak was as yet seen. Soon after some smoak appeared by day, and a flame by night, which seemed to brighten all the campania. At intervals also it shot off substances with a sound very like that of artillery, but which, even at so great a distance as we were at, infinitely exceeded them in greatness. Soon after it began to throw up ashes, which becoming the sport of the winds, fell at great distances, and some many miles. To this succeeded showers of stones, which killed many of the inhabitants of the valley, but made a dreadful ravage among the cattle. Soon after a torrent of burning matter began to roll down the sides of the mountain, at first with a slow and gentle motion, but soon with increased celerity. The matter thus poured out, when cold, seemed, upon inspection, to be of vitrified earth, the whole united into a mass of more than stony hardness. But what

was particularly observable was, that upon the whole surface of these melted materials, a light spongy stone seemed to float, while the lower body was of the hardest substance, of which our roads are usually made. Hitherto there were no appearances but what had been often remarked before; but on the third or fourth day, seeming flashes of lightening were shot forth from the mouth of the mountain, with a noise far exceeding the loudest thunder. These flashes, in colour and brightness, resembled what we usually see in tempests, but they assumed a more twisted and serpentine form. After this followed such clouds of smok and ashes, that the whole city of Naples, in the midst of the day, was involved in nocturnal darkness, and the nearest friends were unable to distinguish each other in this frightful gloom. If any person attempted to stir out without torch-light he was obliged to return, and every part of the city was filled with supplications and terror; at length, after a continuance of some hours, about one o'clock at midnight, the wind blowing from the north, the stars began to be seen; the heavens, though it was night, began to grow brighter; and the eruptions, after a continuance of fifteen days, to lessen. The torrent of melted matter was seen to extend from

the mountain down to the shore; the people began to return to their former dwellings, and the whole face of nature to resume its former appearance."

The famous bishop Berkley gives an account of one of these eruptions in a manner something different from the former. * "In the year 1717, and the middle of April, with much difficulty I reached the top of mount Vesuvius, in which I saw a vast apperture full of smoak, which hindered me from seeing its depth and figure. I heard within that horrid gulph certain extraordinary sounds, which seemed to proceed from the bowels of the mountain, a sort of murmuring, sighing, dashing sound, and between whiles a noise like that of thunder or cannon, with a clattering like that of tiles falling from the tops of houses into the streets. Sometimes, as the wind changed, the smoak grew thinner, discovering a very ruddy flame, and the circumference of the crater streaked with red and several shades of yellow. After an hour's stay, the smoak being moved by the wind, gave us short and partial prospects of the great hollow; in the flat bottom of which I could discern two furnaces almost contiguous; that on the left seeming about three yards

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 209.

over, glowing with ruddy flame, and throwing up red hot stones, with an hideous noise, which, as they fell back, caused the clattering already taken notice of. May 8, in the morning, I ascended the top of Vesuvius a second time, and found a different face of things. The smoak ascending upright, gave a full prospect of the crater, which, as I could judge, was about a mile in circumference, and an hundred yards deep. A conical mount had been formed since my last visit in the middle of the bottom, which I could see was made by the stones, thrown up and fallen back again into the crater. In this new hill remained the two furnaces already mentioned. The one was seen to throw up every three or four minutes, with a dreadful sound, a vast number of red hot stones, at least three hundred feet higher than my head, as I stood upon the brink; but as there was no wind, they fell perpendicularly back from whence they had been discharged. The other was filled with red hot liquid matter, like that in the furnace of a glass-house; raging and working like the waves of the sea, with a short abrupt noise. This matter would sometimes boil over, and run down the side of the conical hill, appearing at first red hot, but changing colour as it hardened and cooled. Had the

wind driven in our faces, we had been in no small danger of stifling by the sulphureous smok, or being killed by the masses of melted minerals, that were shot from the bottom. But as the wind was favourable, I had an opportunity of surveying this amazing scene for above an hour and an half together. On the fifth of June, after an horrid noise, the mountain was seen at Naples to work over; and about three days after, its thunders were renewed so, that not only the windows in the city, but all the houses shook. From that time it continued to overflow, and sometimes at night were seen columns of fire shooting upward from its summit. On the tenth, when all was thought to be over, the mountain again renewed its terrors, roaring and raging most violently. One cannot form a juster idea of the noise, in the most violent fits of it, than by imagining a mixed sound, made up of the raging of a tempest, the murmur of a troubled sea, and the roaring of thunder and arillery, confused all together. Though we heard this at the distance of twelve miles, yet it was very terrible. I therefore resolved to approach nearer to the mountain; and, accordingly, three or four of us got into a boat, and were set ashore at a little town, situated at the foot of the mountain. From thence we rode

about four or five miles, before we came to the torrent of fire that was descending from the side of the volcano; and here the roaring grew exceeding loud and terrible as we approached. I observed a mixture of colours in the cloud, above the crater, green, yellow, red, blue. There was likewise a ruddy dismal light in the air, over that tract where the burning river flowed. These circumstances, set off and augmented by the horror of the night; made a scene the most uncommon and astonishing I ever saw; which still encreased as we approached the burning river. Imagine a vast torrent of liquid fire, rolling from the top, down the side of the mountain, and with irresistible fury bearing down and consuming vines, olives, and houses; and divided into different channels, according to the inequalities of the mountain. The largest stream seemed half a mile broad at least, and five miles long. I walked so far before my companions up the mountain, along the side of the river of fire, that I was obliged to retire in great haste, the sulphureous steam having surprized me, and almost taken away my breath. During our return, which was about three o'clock in the morning, the roaring of the mountain was heard all the way, while we observed it throwing up huge spouts of fire and

burning stones, which falling, resembled the stars in a rocket. Sometimes I observed two or three distinct columns of flame, and sometimes one only that was large enough to fill the whole crater. These burning columns, and fiery stones, seemed to be shot a thousand feet perpendicular above the summit of the volcano: and in this manner the mountain continued raging for six or eight days after. On the eighteenth of the same month the whole appearance ended, and the mountain remained perfectly quiet, without any visible smoke or flame."

The matter which is found to roll down from the mouth of all volcanoes in general, resembles the dross that is thrown from a smith's forge. But it is different, perhaps, in various parts of the globe; for, as we have already said, there is not a quarter of the world that has not its volcanoes. In Asia, particularly in the islands of the Indian ocean, there are many. One of the most famous is that of Albouras, near Mount Taurus, the summit of which is continually on fire, and covers the whole adjacent country with ashes. In the island of Ternate there is a volcano, which some travellers assert, burns most furiously in the times of the equinoxes, because of the winds which

then contribute to encrease the flames. In the Molucca islands there are many burning mountains; they are also seen in Japan, and the islands adjacent; and in Java and Sumatra, as well as in other of the Philippine islands. In Africa there is a cavern, near Fez, which continually sends forth either smoke or flames. In the Cape de Verde islands, one of them, called the Island del Fuogo, continually burns; and the Portuguese, who frequently attempted a settlement there, have as often been obliged to desist. The Peak of Teneriffe is, as every body knows, a volcano that seldom desists from eruptions. But of all parts of the earth, America is the place where those dreadful irregularities of nature are the most conspicuous. Vesuvius, and *Ætna* itself, are but mere fire-works, in comparison to the burning mountains of the Andes; which, as they are the highest mountains of the world, so also are they the most formidable for their eruptions. The mountain of Arequipa in Peru, is one of the most celebrated; Carassa, and Malahallo, are very considerable; but that of Cotopaxi, in the province of Quito, exceeds any thing we have hitherto read or heard of. The mountain of Cotopaxi, as described by Ulloa*, is more

* Ulloa, vol. i. p. 442.

than three miles perpendicular from the sea; and it became a volcano at the time of the Spaniards first arrival in that country. A new eruption of it happened in the year 1743, having been some days preceded by a continual roaring in its bowels. The sound of one of these mountains is not like that of the volcanoes in Europe, confined to a province, but is heard at an hundred and fifty miles distance*.

“ An aperture was made in the summit of this immense mountain; and three more about equal heights, near the middle of its declivity, which was at that time buried under prodigious masses of snow. The ignited substances ejected on that occasion, mixed with a prodigious quantity of ice and snow, melting amidst the flames, were carried down with such astonishing rapidity, that in an instant the valley from Callo to Latacunga was overflowed; and besides its ravages in bearing down the houses of the Indians, and other poor inhabitants, great numbers of people lost their lives. The river of Latacunga was the channel of this terrible flood; till being too small for receiving such a prodigious current, it overflowed the adjacent country, like a vast lake, near the town, and carried away all the buildings within its reach. The inhabitants re-

* Ulloa, vol. i. p. 442.

fired into a spot of higher ground behind the town, of which those parts which stood within the limits of the current were totally destroyed. The dread of still greater devastations did not subside for three days; during which, the volcano ejected cinders, while torrents of melted ice and snow poured down its sides. The eruption lasted several days, and was accompanied with terrible roarings of the wind, rushing through the volcano still louder than the former rumblings in its bowels. At last all was quiet, neither fire nor smoke to be seen, nor noise to be heard; till in the ensuing year, the flames again appeared with recruited violence, forcing their passage through several other parts of the mountain, so that in clear nights the flames being reflected by the transparent ice, formed an awfully magnificent illumination."

Such is the appearance and the effect of those fires which proceed from the more inward recesses of the earth; for that they generally come from deeper regions than man has hitherto explored, I cannot avoid thinking, contrary to the opinion of Mr. Buffon, who supposes them rooted but a very little way below the bed of the mountain. We can never suppose, says this great naturalist, that these substances are ejected

from any great distance below, if we only consider the great force already required to fling them up to such vast heights above the mouth of the mountain; if we consider the substances thrown up, which we shall find upon inspection to be the same with those of the mountain below; if we take into our consideration, that air is always necessary to keep up the flame; but, most of all, if we attend to one circumstance, which is, that if these substances were exploded from a vast depth below, the same force required to shoot them up so high, would act against the sides of the volcano, and tear the whole mountain in pieces. To all this specious reasoning, particular answers might easily be given; as that the length of the funnel encreases the force of the explosion; that the sides of the funnel are actually often burst with the great violence of the flame; that air may be supposed at depths at least as far as the perpendicular fissures descend. But the best answer is a well-known fact; namely, that the quantity of matter discharged from *Ætna* alone, is supposed, upon a moderate computation, to exceed twenty times the original bulk of the mountain*. The greatest part of Sicily seems covered with its eruptions,

* Kircher, *Mund. Subt.* vol. 1. p. 202.

The inhabitants of Catanea have found, at the distance of several miles, streets and houses, sixty feet deep, overwhelmed by the lava or matter it has discharged. But what is still more remarkable, the walls of these very houses have been built of materials evidently thrown up by the mountain. The inference from all this is very obvious; that the matter thus exploded cannot belong to the mountain itself; otherwise, it would have been quickly consumed; it cannot be derived from moderate depths, since its amazing quantity evinces, that all the places near the bottom must have long since been exhausted; nor can it have an extensive, and, if I may so call it, a superficial spread, for then the country round would be quickly undermined; it must, therefore, be supplied from the deeper regions of the earth; those undiscovered tracts where the Deity performs his wonders in solitude, satisfied with self-approbation!

C H A P. X.

Of Earthquakes.

HAVING given the theory of volcanoes, we have in some measure given also that of earthquakes. They both seem to proceed from the same cause, only with this difference, that the fury of the volcano is spent in the eruption, that of an earthquake spreads wider and acts more fatally by being confined. The volcano only affrights a province, earthquakes have laid whole kingdoms in ruin.

Philosophers † have taken some pains to distinguish between the various kinds of earthquakes, such as the tremulous, the pulsative, the perpendicular, and the inclined; but these are rather the distinctions of art than of nature, mere accidental differences arising from the situation of the country or of the cause. If, for instance, the confined fire acts directly under a province or a town, it will heave the earth perpendicularly upward, and produce a *perpendicular* earthquake. If it acts at a distance, it

† Aristotle, Agricola, Buffon.

will raise that tract obliquely, and thus the inhabitants will perceive an *inclined* one.

Nor does it seem to me that there is much greater reason for Mr. Buffon's distinction of earthquakes. One kind of which he supposes* to be produced by fire in the manner of volcanoes, and confined to but a very narrow circumference. The other kind he ascribes to the struggles of confined air, expanded by heat in the bowels of the earth, and endeavouring to get free. For how do these two causes differ? Fire is an agent of no power whatsoever without air. It is the air, which being at first compressed, and then dilated in a cannon, that drives the ball with such force. It is the air struggling for vent in a volcano, that throws up its contents to such vast heights. In short, it is the air confined in the bowels of the earth, and acquiring elasticity by heat, that produces all those appearances which are generally ascribed to the operation of fire. When, therefore, we are told that there are two causes of earthquakes, we only learn, that a greater or smaller quantity of heat produces those terrible effects; for air is the only active operator in either.

Some philosophers, however, have been willing to give the air as great a share in produc-

* Buffon, vol. ii. 328.

ing these terrible efforts as they could; and magnifying its powers have called in but a very moderate degree of heat to put it in action. Although experience tells us that the earth is full of inflammable materials, and that fires are produced wherever we descend; although it tells us that those countries, where there are volcanoes, are most subject to earthquakes, yet they step out of the way, and so find a new solution. These only allow but just heat enough to produce the most dreadful phenomena, and backing their assertions with long calculations, give theory an air of demonstration. Mr. Amontons || has been particularly sparing of the internal heat in this respect; and has shewn, perhaps accurately enough, that a very moderate degree of heat may suffice to give the air amazing powers of expansion.

It is amazing enough, however, to trace the progress of a philosophical fancy let loose in imaginary speculations. They run thus: "A very moderate degree of heat may bring the air into a condition capable of producing earthquakes; for the air at the depth of forty-three thousand five hundred and twenty-eight fathom below the surface of the earth, becomes almost as heavy as quick-silver.

|| Memoires de l'Accademie de Sciences, An. 1703.

This, however, is but a very slight depth in comparison of the distance to the center, and is scarce a seventieth part of the way. The air, therefore, at the center must be infinitely heavier than mercury, or any body that we know of. This granted, we shall take something more, and say, that it is very probable there is nothing but air at the center. Now let us suppose this air heated, by some means, even to the degree of boiling water, as we have proved that the density of the air is here very great, its elasticity must be in proportion : an heat, therefore, which at the surface of the earth would have produced but a slight expansive force, must at the center produce one very extraordinary, and, in short, be perfectly irresistible. Hence this force may with great ease produce earthquakes ; and if encreased it may convulse the globe ; it may (by only adding figures enough to the calculation) destroy the solar system, and even the fixed stars themselves." These reveries generally produce nothing ; for, as I have ever observed, encreased calculations, while they seem to tire the memory, give the reasoning faculty perfect repose.

However, as earthquakes are the most formidable ministers of nature, it is not to be

wondered that a multitude of writers have been curiously employed in their consideration, Woodward has ascribed the cause to a stoppage of the waters below the earth's surface by some accident. These being thus accumulated, and yet acted upon by fires, which he supposes still deeper, both contribute to heave up the earth upon their bosom. This he thinks accounts for the lakes of water produced in an earthquake, as well as for the fires that sometimes burst from the earth's surface upon those dreadful occasions. There are others still who have supposed that the earth may be itself the cause of its own convulsions. When, say they, the roots or basis of some large tract is worn away by a fluid underneath, the earth sinking therein, its weight occasions a tremor of the adjacent parts, sometimes producing a noise, and sometimes an inundation of water. Not to tire the reader with an history of opinions instead of facts, some have ascribed them to electricity, and some to the same causes that produce thunder.

It would be tedious, therefore, to give all the various opinions that have employed the speculative upon this subject. The activity of the internal heat seems alone sufficient to account for every appearance that attends these

tremendous irregularities of nature. To conceive this distinctly, let us suppose at some vast distance under the earth, large quantities of inflammable matter, pyrites, bitumens, and marcasites disposed, and only waiting for the aspersions of water, or the humidity of the air, to put their fires in motion: at last, this dreadful mixture arrives; waters find their way into those depths, through the perpendicular fissures; or air insinuates itself through the same minute apertures: straight new appearances ensue: those substances, which for ages before lay dormant, now conceive new apparent qualities; they grow hot, produce new air, and only want room for expansion. However, the narrow apertures by which the air or water had at first admission, are now closed up; yet as new air is continually generated, and as the heat every moment gives this air new elasticity, it at length bursts, and dilates all round; and, in its struggles to get free, throws all above it into similar convulsions. Thus an earthquake is produced, more or less extensive, according to the depth or the greatness of the cause.

But before we proceed with the causes, let us take a short view of the appearances which have attended the most remarkable earthquakes. By these we shall see how far the

theorist corresponds with the historian. The greatest we find in antiquity, is that mentioned by Pliny *, in which twelve cities in Asia Minor were swallowed up in one night: he tells us also of another, near the lake Thrasymene, which was not perceived by the armies of the Carthaginians and Romans, that were then engaged near that lake, although it shook the greatest part of Italy. In another place † he gives the following account of an earthquake of an extraordinary kind. “ When Lucius Marcus, and Sextus Julius, were consuls, there appeared a very strange prodigy of the earth, (as I have read in the books of Ætruscan discipline) which happened in the province of Mutina. Two mountains shocked against each other, approaching and retiring with the most dreadful noise. They, at the same time, and in the midst of the day, appeared to cast forth fire and smoke, while a vast number of Roman knights and travellers from the Æmilian way, stood and continued amazed spectators. Several towns were destroyed by this shock; and all the animals that were near them were killed.” In the times of Trajan, the city of Antioch, and a great part of the adjacent country, was buried by an earthquake. About

* Plin. lib. ii. cap. 86.

† Ibid. lib. iii. cap. 83.

three hundred years after, in the times of Justinian, it was once more destroyed, together with forty thousand inhabitants: and, after an interval of sixty years, the same ill-fated city was a third time overturned, with the loss of not less than sixty thousand souls. In the year 1182, most of the cities of Syria, and the kingdom of Jerusalem, were destroyed by the same accident. In the year 1594, the Italian historians describe an earthquake at Puteoli, which caused the sea to retire two hundred yards from its former bed.

But one of those most particularly described in history, is that of the year 1693; the damages of which were chiefly felt in Sicily, but its motion perceived in Germany, France, and England. It extended to a circumference of two thousand six hundred leagues; chiefly affecting the sea-coasts, and great rivers; more perceivable also upon the mountains than in the valleys. Its motions were so rapid, that those who lay at their length, were tossed from side to side, as upon a rolling billow *. The walls were dashed from their foundations; and no less than fifty-four cities, with an incredible number of villages, were either destroyed or greatly damaged. The city of Catanea, in particular,

* Phil. Transf.

was utterly overthrown. A traveller, who was on his way thither, at the distance of some miles, perceived a black cloud, like night, hanging over the place. The sea, all of a sudden, began to roar; Mount *Ætna* to send forth great spires of flame; and soon after a shock ensued, with a noise as if all the artillery in the world had been at once discharged. Our traveller, being obliged to alight instantly, felt himself raised a foot from the ground; and turning his eyes to the city, he with amazement saw nothing but a thick cloud of dust in the air. The birds flew about astonished; the sun was darkened; the beasts ran howling from the hills; and, although the shock did not continue above three minutes, yet near nineteen thousand of the inhabitants of Sicily perished in the ruins. Catanea, to which city the describer was travelling, seemed the principal scene of ruin; its place only was to be found; and not a footstep of its former magnificence was to be seen remaining.

The earthquake which happened in Jamaica, in 1692, was very terrible, and its description sufficiently minute. “In two minutes time it destroyed the town of Portugal, and sunk the houses in a gulph forty fathoms deep. It was attended with an hollow rumbling noise, like

that of thunder; and, in less than a minute, three parts of the houses, and their inhabitants, were all sunk quite under water. While they were thus swallowed up on one side of the street, on the other, the houses were thrown into heaps; the sand of the street rising like the waves of the sea, lifting up those that stood upon it, and immediately overwhelming them in pits. All the wells discharged their waters with the most vehement agitation. The sea felt an equal share of turbulence, and, bursting over its mounds, deluged all that came in its way. The fissures of the earth were, in some places, so great, that one of the streets appeared twice as broad as formerly. In many places, however, it opened and closed again, and continued this agitation for some time. Of these openings, two or three hundred might be seen at a time; in some whereof the people were swallowed up; in others, the earth closing, caught them by the middle, and thus crushed them instantly to death. Other openings, still more dreadful than the rest, swallowed up whole streets; and others, more formidable still, spouted up whole cataracts of water, drowning such as the earthquake had spared. The whole was attended with the most noisome stench; while the thundering of the distant falling mountains, the whole sky overcast

with a dusky gloom, and the crush of falling habitations, gave unspeakable horror to the scene. After this dreadful calamity was over, the whole island seemed converted into a scene of desolation; scarce a planter's house was left standing; almost all were swallowed up; houses, people, trees, shared one universal ruin; and, in their places appeared great pools of water, which, when dried up by the sun, left only a plain of barren sand, without any vestige of former inhabitants. Most of the rivers, during the earthquake, were stopt up by the falling in of the mountains; and it was not till after some time that they made themselves new channels. The mountains seemed particularly attacked by the force of the shock; and it was supposed that the principal seat of the concussion was among them. Those who were saved, got on board ships in the harbour; where many remained above two months, the shocks continuing during that interval with more or less violence every day."

As this description seems to exhibit all the appearances that usually make up the catalogue of terrors belonging to an earthquake, I will suppress the detail of that which happened at Lisbon, in our own times, and which is too recent to require a description. In fact, there are

few particulars in the accounts of those who were present at that scene of desolation, that we have not more minutely and accurately transmitted to us by former writers, whose narratives I have for that reason preferred. I will, therefore, close this description of human calamities, with the account of the dreadful earthquake at Calabria, in 1638. It is related by the celebrated Father Kircher, as it happened while he was on his journey to visit Mount *Ætna*, and the rest of the wonders that lie towards the south of Italy. I need scarce inform the reader that Kircher is considered, by scholars, as one of the greatest prodigies of learning.

“Having hired a boat, in company with four more, two friars of the order of St. Francis, and two seculars, we launched, on the twenty-fourth of March, from the harbour of Messina, in Sicily, and arrived, the same day, at the promontory of Pelorus. Our destination was for the city of Euphæmia, in Calabria, where we had some business to transact, and where we designed to tarry for some time. However, Providence seemed willing to cross our design; for we were obliged to continue for three days at Pelorus, upon account of the weather; and though we often put out to sea, yet we were as often driven back. At length, however, wea-

ried with the delay, we resolved to prosecute our voyage; and, although the sea seemed more than usually agitated, yet we ventured forward. The gulph of Charybdis, which we approached, seemed whirled round in such a manner as to form a vast hollow, verging to a point in the center. Proceeding onward, and turning my eyes to *Ætna*, I saw it cast forth large volumes of smoke, of mountainous sizes, which entirely covered the whole island, and blotted out the very shores from my view. This, together with the dreadful noise, and the sulphureous stench, which was strongly perceived, filled me with apprehensions that some more dreadful calamity was impending. The sea itself seemed to wear a very unusual appearance; those who have seen a lake in a violent shower of rain covered all over with bubbles, will conceive some idea of its agitations. My surprize was still encreased by the calmness and serenity of the weather; not a breeze, not a cloud which might be supposed to put all Nature thus into motion. I therefore warned my companions that an earthquake was approaching; and, after some time, making for the shore with all possible diligence, we landed at *Tropæa*, happy and thankful for having escaped the threatening dangers of the sea.

“ But our triumphs at land were of short duration ; for we had scarce arrived at the Jesuits College in that city, when our ears were stunned with an horrid sound, resembling that of an infinite number of chariots driven fiercely forward, the wheels rattling, and the thongs cracking. Soon after this, a most dreadful earthquake ensued ; so that the whole tract upon which we stood, seemed to vibrate, as if we were in the scale of a balance that continued wavering. This motion, however, soon grew more violent ; and being no longer able to keep my legs, I was thrown prostrate upon the ground. In the mean time, the universal ruin round me, redoubled my amazement. The crash of falling houses, the tottering of towers, and the groans of the dying, all contributed to raise my terror and despair. On every side of me I saw nothing but a scene of ruin ; and danger threatening wherever I should fly. I commended myself to God as my last great refuge. At that hour, O how vain was every sublunary happiness ! wealth, honour, empire, wisdom, all mere useless sounds, and as empty as the bubbles in the deep. Just standing on the threshold of eternity, nothing but God was my pleasure ; and the nearer I approached, I only loved him the more. After some time, how-

ever, finding that I remained unhurt, amidst the general concussion, I resolved to venture for safety, and running as fast as I could, reached the shore, but almost terrified out of my reason. I did not search long here till I found the boat in which I had landed, and my companions also, whose terrors were even greater than mine. Our meeting was not of that kind where every one is desirous of telling his own happy escape; it was all silence, and a gloomy dread of impending terrors.

“ Leaving this seat of desolation, we prosecuted our voyage along the coasts; and the next day came to Rochetta, where we landed, although the earth still continued in violent agitations. But we were scarce arrived at our inn, when we were once more obliged to return to the boat; and, in about half an hour, we saw the greatest part of the town, and the inn at which we had set up, dashed to the ground, and burying all its inhabitants beneath its ruins.

“ In this manner, proceeding onward in our little vessel, finding no safety at land, and yet, from the smallness of our boat, having but a very dangerous continuance at sea, we at length landed at Lopizium, a castle midway between Tropæa and Euphemia, the city to which, as I

said before, we were bound. Here, wherever I turned my eyes, nothing but scenes of ruin and horror appeared; towns and castles levelled to the ground; Strombalo, though at sixty miles distance, belching forth flames in an unusual manner, and with a noise which I could distinctly hear. But my attention was quickly turned from more remote to contiguous danger. The rumbling sound of an approaching earthquake, which we by this time were grown acquainted with, alarmed us for the consequences; it every moment seemed to grow louder, and to approach more near. The place on which we stood now began to shake most dreadfully, so that being unable to stand, my companions and I caught hold of whatever shrub grew next us, and supported ourselves in that manner.

“ After some time, this violent paroxysm ceasing, we again stood up, in order to prosecute our voyage to Euphæmia, that lay within sight. In the mean time, while we were preparing for this purpose, I turned my eyes towards the city, but could see only a frightful dark cloud, that seemed to rest upon the place. This the more surprized us, as the weather was so very serene. We waited, therefore, till the cloud was past away: then turning to look for the city, it was totally sunk. Wonderful to tell!

nothing but a dismal and putrid lake was seen where it stood. We looked about to find some one that could tell us of its sad catastrophe, but could see none. All was become a melancholy solitude; a scene of hideous desolation. Thus proceeding pensively along, in quest of some human being that could give us some little information, we at length saw a boy sitting by the shore, and appearing stupified with terror. Of him, therefore, we enquired concerning the fate of the city; but he could be got to give us no answer. We entreated him with every expression of tenderness and pity to tell us; but his senses were quite wrapt up in the contemplation of the danger he had escaped. We offered him some victuals, but he seemed to loath the sight. We still persisted in our offices of kindness; but he only pointed to the place of the city, like one out of his senses; and then running up into the woods, was never heard of after. Such was the fate of the city of Euphæmia: and as we continued our melancholy course along the shore, the whole coast, for the space of two hundred miles, presented nothing but the remains of cities; and men scattered, without an habitation, over the fields. Proceeding thus along, we at length ended our distressful voyage by arriving at Naples, after

having escaped a thousand dangers both at sea and land."

The reader, I hope, will excuse me for this long translation from a favourite writer, and that the sooner, as it contains some particulars relative to earthquakes not to be found elsewhere. From the whole of these accounts we may gather, that the most concomitant circumstances are these :

A rumbling sound before the earthquake. This proceeds from the air, or fire, or both, forcing their way through the chasms of the earth, and endeavouring to get free, which is also heard in volcanoes.

A violent agitation, or heaving of the sea, sometimes before and sometimes after that at land. This agitation is only a similar effect produced on the waters with that at land, and may be called, for the sake of perspicuity, a sea-quake ; and this, also, is produced by volcanoes.

A spouting up of waters to great heights. It is not easy to describe the manner in which this is performed ; but volcanoes also perform the same, Vesuvius being known frequently to eject a vast body of waters.

A rocking of the earth to and fro, and sometimes a perpendicular bouncing, if it may be



so called, of the same. This difference chiefly arises from the situation of the place with respect to the subterranean fire. Directly under, it lifts; at a farther distance, it rocks.

Some earthquakes seem to travel onward, and are felt in different countries at different hours the same day. This arises from the great shock being given to the earth at one place, and that being communicated onward by an undulatory motion, successively affects different regions in its progress. As the blow given by a stone falling in a lake is not perceived at the shores till some time after the first concussion.

The shock is sometimes instantaneous, like the explosion of gunpowder; and sometimes tremulous, and continuing for several minutes. The nearer the place where the shock is first given, the more instantaneous and simple it appears. At a greater distance the earth redoubles the first blow with a sort of vibratory continuation.

As waters have generally so great a share in producing earthquakes, it is not to be wondered that they should generally follow those breaches made by the force of fire, and appear in the great chasms which the earthquake has opened.

These are some of the most remarkable

phœnomena of earthquakes, presenting a frightful assemblage of the most terrible effects of air, earth, fire, and water.

The valley of Solfatara, near Naples, seems to exhibit, in a minuter degree, whatever is seen of this horrible kind on the great theatre of Nature. This plain, which is about twelve hundred feet long, and a thousand broad, is embosomed in mountains, and has in the middle of it a lake of noisome blackish water, covered with a bitumen, that floats upon its surface. In every part of this plain, caverns appear smoking with sulphur, and often emitting flames. The earth, wherever we walk over it, trembles beneath the feet. Noises of flames, and the hissing of waters, are heard at the bottom. The water sometimes spouts up eight or ten feet high. The most noisome fumes, foetid water, and sulphureous vapours, offend the smell. A stone thrown into any of the caverns, is ejected again with considerable violence. These appearances generally prevail when the sea is any way disturbed; and the whole seems to exhibit the appearance of an earthquake in miniature. However, in this smaller scene of wonders, as well as in the greater, there are many appearances for which perhaps we shall never account; and many questions may be asked, which no conjectures

can thoroughly resolve. It was the fault of the philosophers of the last age, to be more inquisitive after the causes of things, than after the things themselves. They seemed to think that a confession of ignorance cancelled their claims to wisdom: they, therefore, had a solution for every demand. But the present age has grown, if not more inquisitive, at least more modest; and none are now ashamed of that ignorance which labour can neither remedy nor remove,

C H A P. XI.

Of the Appearance of New Islands, and Tracts;
and of the disappearing of others.

HITHERTO we have taken a survey only of the evils which are produced by subterranean fires, but we have mentioned nothing of the benefits they may possibly produce. They may be of use in warming and cherishing the ground, in promoting vegetation, and giving a more exquisite flavour to the productions of the earth. The imagination of a person who has never been out of our own mild region, can scarcely reach to that luxuriant beauty with which all Nature appears cloathed in those very countries that we

have but just now described as desolated by earthquakes, and undermined by subterranean fires. It must be granted, therefore, that though in those regions they have a greater share in the dangers, they have also a larger proportion in the benefits of Nature.

But there is another advantage arising from subterranean fires, which, though hitherto disregarded by man, yet may one day become serviceable to him; I mean, that while they are found to swallow up cities and plains in one place, they are also known to produce promontaries and islands in another. We have many instances of islands being thus formed in the midst of the sea, which though for a long time barren, have afterwards become fruitful seats of happiness and industry.

New islands are formed in two ways; either suddenly, by the action of subterraneous fires; or more slowly, by the deposition of mud, carried down by rivers, and stopped by some accident*. With respect particularly to the first, ancient historians, and modern travellers, give us such accounts as we can have no room to doubt of. Seneca assures us, that in his time the island of Therasia appeared unexpectedly to some mariners, as they were employed in

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 343.

another pursuit. Pliny assures us, that thirteen islands in the Mediterranean appeared at once emerging from the water; the cause of which he ascribes rather to the retiring of the sea in those parts, than to any subterraneous elevation. However, he mentions the island of Hieria, near that of Therasia, as formed by subterraneous explosions; and adds to his list several others, formed in the same manner. In one of which he relates that fish in great abundance were found, and that all those who eat of them died shortly after.

“ On the twenty-fourth of May *, in the year 1707, a slight earthquake was perceived at Santorin; and the day following, at sun-rising, an object was seen by the inhabitants of that island, at two or three miles distance at sea, which appeared like a floating rock. Some persons, desirous either of gain, or incited by curiosity, went there, and found, even while they stood upon this rock, that it seemed to rise beneath their feet. They perceived also, that its surface was covered with pumice stones, and oysters, which it had raised from the bottom. Every day after, until the fourteenth of June, this rock seemed considerably to encrease; and then was found to be half a mile round, and

* Hist. del Accad. an. 1708, p. 23.

about thirty feet above the sea. The earth of which it was composed, seemed whitish, with a small portion of clay. Soon after this the sea again appeared troubled, and steams arose, which were very offensive to the inhabitants of Santorin. But on the sixteenth of the succeeding month, seventeen or eighteen rocks more were seen to rise out of the sea, and at length to join together. All this was accompanied with the most terrible noise, and fires that proceeded from the island that was newly formed. The whole mass, however, of all this new-formed earth, uniting, encreased every day, both in height and breadth, and, by the force of its explosions, cast forth rocks to seven miles distance. This continued to bear the same dreadful appearances till the month of November in the same year; and it is at present a volcano which sometimes renews its explosions. It is about three miles in circumference; and more than from thirty-five to forty feet high."

It seems extraordinary, that about this place in particular, islands have appeared at different times, particularly that of Hiera, mentioned above, which has received considerable additions in succeeding ages. Justin * tells us, that at the time the Macedonians were at war with

* Justin, l. 30, cap. 4.

the Romans, a new island appeared between those of Theramenes and Therasia, by means of an earthquake. We are told, that this became half as big again about a thousand years after; another island rising up by its side, and joining to it, so as scarce at present to be distinguished from the former.

A new island was formed, in the year 1720, near that of Tercera, near the continent of Africa, by the same causes. In the beginning of December, at night, there was a terrible earthquake at that place, and the top of a new island appeared, which cast forth smoke in vast quantities. The pilot of a ship, who approached it, sounded on one side of this island, and could not find ground at sixty fathom. At the other side the sea was totally tinged of a different colour, exhibiting a mixture of white, blue, and green; and was very shallow. This island, on its first appearance, was larger than it is at present; for it has, since that time, sunk in such a manner, as to be scarce above water.

A traveller, whom these appearances could not avoid affecting, speaks of them in this manner: * “What can be more surprizing than to see fire not only break out of the bowels of the earth, but also to make itself a passage through

* Phil. Transf. vol. v. p. 197.

the waters of the sea! What can be more extraordinary or foreign to our common notions of things, than to see the bottom of the sea rise up into a mountain above the water, and become so firm an island as to be able to resist the violence of the greatest storms! I know that subterraneous fires, when pent in a narrow passage, are able to raise up a mass of earth as large as an island. But that this should be done in so regular and exact a manner, that the water of the sea should not be able to penetrate and extinguish those fires; that, after having made so many passages, they should retain force enough to raise the earth; and, in fine, after having been extinguished, that the mass of earth should not fall down, or sink again with its own weight, but still remain in a manner suspended over the great arch below! This is what to me seems more surprizing than any thing that has been related of Mount *Ætna*, *Vesuvius*, or any other volcano."

Such are his sentiments; however, there are few of these appearances any way more extraordinary than those attending volcanoes and earthquakes in general. We are not more to be surprized that inflammable substances should be found beneath the bottom of the sea, than at similar depths at land. These

have all the force of fire giving expansion to air, and tending to raise the earth at the bottom of the sea, till it at length heaves above water. These marine volcanoes are not so frequent; for, if we may judge of the usual procedure of Nature, it must very often happen that, before the bottom of the sea is elevated above the surface, a chasm is opened in it, and then the water pressing in, extinguishes the volcano before it has time to produce its effects. This extinction, however, is not effected without very great resistance from the fire beneath. The water, upon dashing into the cavern, is very probably at first ejected back with great violence; and thus some of those amazing water-spouts are seen, which have so often astonished the mariner, and excited curiosity.—But of these in their place.

Besides the production of those islands by the action of fire, there are others, as was said, produced by rivers or seas carrying mud, earth, and such like substances, along with their currents; and at last depositing them in some particular place. At the mouths of most great rivers, there are to be seen banks, thus formed by the sand and mud carried down with the stream, which have rested at that place, where the force of the current is diminished by its junction with the sea. These banks, by slow

degrees, encrease at the bottom of the deep; the water, in those places, is at first found by mariners to grow more shallow; the bank soon heaves up above the surface; it is considered, for a while, as a tract of useless and barren sand; but the seeds of some of the more hardy vegetables are driven thither by the wind, they take root, and thus binding the sandy surface, the whole spot is cloathed in time with a beautiful verdure. In this manner there are delightful and inhabited islands at the mouths of many rivers, particularly the Nile, the Po, the Mississippi, the Ganges, and the Senegal. There has been, in the memory of man, a beautiful and large island formed in this manner, at the mouth of the river Nanquin, in China, made from depositions of mud at its opening: it is not less than sixty miles long, and about twenty broad. La Loubere informs us*, in his voyage to Siam, that these sand-banks encrease every day, at the mouths of all the great rivers in Asia: and hence he asserts, that the navigation up these rivers becomes every day more difficult; and will, at one time or another, be totally obstructed. The same may be remarked with regard to the Wolga, which has at present seventy openings into the Caspian sea; and of

* Lettres Curieuses et Edifiantes, sec. xi, p. 234.

the Danube, which has seven into the Euxine. We have had an instance of the formation of a new island, not very long since, at the mouth of the Humber, in England. "It is yet within the memory of man," says the relator *, "since it began to raise its head above the ocean. It began its appearance at low water, for the space of a few hours; and was buried again till the next tide's retreat. Thus, successively, it lived and died, until the year 1666, when it began to maintain its ground against the insult of the waves; and then first invited the aid of human industry. A bank was thrown about its rising grounds; and being thus defended from the incursions of the sea, it became firm and solid, and, in a short time, afforded good pasturage for cattle. It is about nine miles in circumference, and is worth to the proprietor about eight hundred pounds a year." It would be endless to mention all the islands that have been thus formed; and the advantages that have been derived from them. However, it is frequently found, that new islands thus formed, may often be considered as only turning the rivers from their former beds; so that, in proportion as land is gained at one part, it is lost by the overflowing of some other.

* Phil Trans. vol. iv. p. 251.

Little, therefore, is gained by such accessions. Nor is there much more by the new islands which are sometimes formed from the spoils of the continent. Mariners assure us, that there are sometimes whole plains unrooted from the main lands, by floods and tempests. These being carried out to sea, with all their trees and animals upon them, are frequently seen floating in the ocean, and exhibiting a surprizing appearance of rural tranquillity in the midst of danger. The greatest part, however, having the earth at their roots at length washed away, are dispersed, and their animals drowned; but now and then some are found to brave the fury of the ocean, till being stuck either among rocks or sands, they again take firm footing, and become permanent islands.

As different causes have thus concurred to produce new islands, so we have accounts of others that the same causes have contributed to destroy. We have already seen the power of earthquakes exerted in sinking whole cities, and leaving lakes in their room. There have been islands, and regions also, that have shared the same fate; and have sunk with their inhabitants, never more to be heard of. Thus Pausanias * tells us of an island, called Chryses, that was

* Pausanias, l. 8, in Arcad. p. 509.

sunk near Lemnos. Pliny mentions several; among others, the island Cea, for thirty miles, having been washed away, with several thousands of its inhabitants. But of all the noted devastations of this kind, the total submersion of the island of Atalantis, as mentioned by Plato, has been most the subject of speculation. Mankind, in general, now consider the whole of his account as an ingenious fable; but when fables are grown famous by time and authority, they become an agreeable, if not a necessary part of literary information.

About nine thousand years are passed, says Plato *, since the island of Atalantis was in being. The priests of Egypt were well acquainted with it; and the first heroes of Athens gained much glory in their wars with the inhabitants. This island was as large as Asia Minor and Syria united; and was situated beyond the pillars of Hercules, in the Atlantic ocean. The beauty of the buildings, and the fertility of the soil, were far beyond any thing a modern imagination can conceive; gold and ivory were every where common; and the fruits of the earth offered themselves without cultivation. The arts, and the courage of the inhabitants, were not inferior to the happiness of their situ-

* Plato in Critia.

ation; and they were frequently known to make conquests, and overrun the continent of Europe and Asia. The imagination of the poetical philosopher riots in the description of the natural and acquired advantages, which they long enjoyed in this charming region. If, says he, we compare that country to our own, ours will appear a mere wasted skeleton, when opposed to it. Their mountains to the very tops were cloathed with fertility, and poured down rivers to enrich the plains below.

However, all these beauties and benefits were destroyed in one day by an earthquake sinking the earth, and the sea overwhelming it. At present, not the smallest vestiges of such an island are to be found; Plato remains as the only authority for its existence; and philosophers dispute about its situation. It is not for me to enter into the controversy, when there appears but little probability to support the fact; and, indeed, it would be useless to run back nine thousand years in search of difficulties, as we are surrounded with objects that more closely affect us, and that demand admiration at our very doors. When I consider, as Lactantius suggests, the various vicissitudes of nature; lands swallowed by yawning earthquakes, or overwhelmed in the deep; rivers and lakes disap-

pearing, or dried away; mountains levelled into plains; and plains swelling up into mountains; I cannot help regarding this earth as a place of very little stability; as a transient abode of still more transitory beings.

C H A P. XII.

Of Mountains.

HAVING at last, in some measure, emerged from the deeps of the earth, we come to a scene of greater splendour; the contemplation of its external appearance. In this survey, its mountains are the first objects that strike the imagination, and excite our curiosity. There is not, perhaps, any thing in all nature that impresses an unaccustomed spectator with such ideas of awful solemnity, as these immense piles of Nature's erecting, that seem to mock the minuteness of human magnificence.

In countries where there are nothing but plains, the smallest elevations are apt to excite wonder. In Holland, which is all a flat, they shew a little ridge of hills, near the sea-side, which Boerhaave generally marked out to his pupils as being mountains of no small con-

sideration. What would be the sensations of such an auditory, could they at once be presented with a view of the heights and precipices of the Alps, or the Andes! Even among us in England, we have no adequate ideas of a mountain-prospect; our hills are generally sloping from the plain, and cloathed to the very top with verdure; we can scarce, therefore, lift our imaginations to those immense piles whose tops peep up behind intervening clouds, sharp and precipitate, and reach to heights that human avarice or curiosity have never been able to ascend.

We, in this part of the world, are not, for that reason, so immediately interested in the question which has so long been agitated among philosophers, concerning what gave rise to these inequalities on the surface of the globe. In our own happy region, we generally see no inequalities but such as contribute to use and beauty; and we, therefore, are amazed at a question enquiring how such necessary inequalities came to be formed, and seeming to express a wonder how the globe comes to be so beautiful as we find it. But though with us there may be no great cause for such a demand, yet in those places where mountains deform the face of Nature, where they pour down cataracts, or give fury

to tempests, there seems to be good reason for enquiry either into their causes or their uses. It has been, therefore, asked by many, in what manner mountains have come to be formed; or for what uses they are designed?

To satisfy curiosity in these respects, much reasoning has been employed, and very little knowledge propagated. With regard to the first part of the demand, the manner in which mountains were formed, we have already seen the conjectures of different philosophers on that head. One supposing that they were formed from the earth's broken shell, at the time of the deluge: another, that they existed from the creation, and only acquired their deformities in process of time: a third, that they owed their original to earthquakes: and still a fourth, with much more plausibility than the rest, ascribing them entirely to the fluctuations of the deep, which he supposes in the beginning to have covered the whole earth. Such as are pleased with disquisitions of this kind, may consult Burnet, Whiston, Woodward, or Buffon. Nor would I be thought to decry any mental amusements, that at worst keep us innocently employed; but, for my own part, I cannot help wondering how the opposite demand has never come to be made; and why

philosophers have never asked how we come to have plains? Plains are sometimes more prejudicial to man than mountains. Upon plains, an inundation has greater power; the beams of the sun are often collected there with suffocating fierceness; they are sometimes found desert for several hundred miles together, as in the country east of the Caspian sea, although otherwise fruitful, merely because there are no risings nor depressions to form reservoirs, or collect the smallest rivulet of water. The most rational answer, therefore, why either mountains or plains were formed, seems to be, that they were thus fashioned by the hand of Wisdom, in order that pain and pleasure should be so contiguous as that morality might be exercised either in bearing the one, or communicating the other.

Indeed, the more I consider this dispute respecting the formation of mountains, the more I am struck with the futility of the question. There is neither a strait line, nor an exact superficies, in all nature. If we consider a circle, even with mathematical precision, we shall find it formed of a number of small right lines, joining at angles together. These angles, therefore, may be considered in a circle as mountains are upon our globe; and to demand the reason

for the one being mountainous, or the other angular, is only to ask why a circle is a circle, or a globe is a globe. In short, if there be no surface without inequality in Nature, why should we be surprized that the earth has such? It has often been said, that the inequalities of its surface are scarce distinguishable, if compared to its magnitude; and I think we have every reason to be content with the answer.

Some, however, have avoided the difficulty by urging the final cause. They alledge that mountains have been formed merely because they are useful to man. This carries the enquirer but a part of the way; for no one can affirm that in all places they are useful. The contrary is known, by horrid experience, in those valleys that are subject to their influence. However, as the utility of any part of our earthly habitation, is a very pleasing and flattering speculation to every philosopher, it is not to be wondered that much has been said to prove the usefulness of these. For this purpose, many conjectures have been made that have received a degree of assent even beyond their evidence; for men were unwilling to become more miserably wise.

It has been alledged, as one principal ad-

vantage that we derive from them, that they serve, like hoops or ribs, to strengthen our earth, and to bind it together. In consequence of this theory, Kircher has given us a map of the earth, in this manner hooped with its mountains; which might have a much more solid foundation, did it entirely correspond with truth.

Others have found a different use for them, especially when they run surrounding our globe; which is, that they stop the vapours that are continually travelling from the equator to the poles; for these being urged by the heat of the sun, from the warm regions of the line, must all be accumulated at the poles, if they were not stopped in their way by those high ridges of mountains which cross their direction. But an answer to this may be, that all the great mountains in America lie lengthwise, and therefore do not cross their direction.

But to leave these remote advantages, others assert, that not only the animal but vegetable part of the creation would perish for want of convenient humidity, were it not for their friendly assistance. Their summits are, by these, supposed to arrest, as it were, the vapours which float in the regions of the air. Their large inflexions, and channels, are considered as

so many basons prepared for the reception of those thick vapours, and impetuous rains, which descend into them. The huge caverns beneath are so many magazines or conservatories of water for the peculiar service of man: and those orifices by which the water is discharged upon the plain, are so situated as to enrich and render them fruitful, instead of returning through subterraneous channels to the sea, after the performance of a tedious and fruitless circulation *.

However this be, certain it is that almost all our great rivers find their source among mountains; and, in general, the more extensive the mountain, the greater the river: thus the river Amazons, the greatest in the world, has its source among the Andes, which are the highest mountains on the globe; the river Niger travels a long course of several hundred miles from the mountains of the Moon, the highest in all Africa; and the Danube and the Rhine proceed from the Alps, which are probably the highest mountains of Europe.

It need scarce be said that, with respect to height, there are many sizes of mountains, from the gently rising upland, to the tall craggy

* Nature Display'd, vol. iii. p. 88.

precipice. The appearance is in general different in those of different magnitudes. The first are cloathed with verdure to the very tops, and only seem to ascend to improve our prospects, or supply us with a purer air: but the lofty mountains of the other class have a very different aspect. At a distance their tops are seen, in wavy ridges, of the very colour of the clouds, and only to be distinguished from them by their figure, which, as I have said, resembles the billows of the sea *. As we approach, the mountain assumes a deeper colour; it gathers upon the sky, and seems to hide half the horizon behind it. Its summits also are become more distinct, and appear with a broken and perpendicular line. What at first seemed a single hill, is now found to be a chain of continued mountains, whose tops running along in ridges, are embosomed in each other; so that the curvatures of one are fitted to the prominences of the opposite side, and form a winding valley between, often of several miles in extent; and all the way continuing nearly of the same breadth. Nothing can be finer, or more exact than Mr. Pope's description of a traveller straining up the Alps. Every mountain he comes to he thinks will be the last; he finds,

* Lettres Philosophiques sur la Formation, &c. p. 196.

however, an unexpected hill rise before him; and that being scaled, he finds the highest summit almost at as great a distance as before. Upon quitting the plain, he might have left a green and a fertile soil, and a climate warm and pleasing. As he ascends, the ground assumes a more ruflet colour; the grass becomes more mossy; and the weather more moderate. Still as he ascends, the weather becomes more cold, and the earth more barren. In this dreary passage, he is often entertained with a little valley of surprizing verdure, caused by the reflected heat of the sun collected into a narrow spot on the surrounding heights. But it much more frequently happens that he sees only frightful precipices beneath, and lakes of amazing depths; from whence rivers are formed, and fountains derive their original. On those places next the highest summits, vegetation is scarcely carried on; here and there a few plants of the most hardy kind appear. The air is intolerably cold; either continually refrigerated with frosts, or disturbed with tempests. All the ground here wears an eternal covering of ice, and snows that seem constantly accumulating. Upon emerging from this war of the elements, he ascends into a purer and a serener region, where vegetation is entirely

ceased; where the precipices, composed entirely of rocks, rise perpendicularly above him; while he views beneath him all the combat of the elements; clouds at his feet; and thunders darting upward from their bosoms below *. A thousand meteors, which are never seen on the plain, present themselves. Circular rainbows †; mock suns; the shadow of the mountain projected upon the body of the air ‡; and the traveller's own image, reflected as in a looking-glass, upon the opposite cloud ||.

Such are, in general, the wonders that present themselves to a traveller in his journey either over the Alps or the Andes. But we must not suppose that this picture exhibits either a constant or an invariable likeness of those stupendous heights. Indeed, nothing can be more capricious or irregular than the forms of many of them. The tops of some run in ridges for a considerable length, without interruption; in others, the line seems notched by great vallies to an amazing depth. Sometimes a solitary and a single mountain rises from the bosom of the plain; and sometimes extensive plains, and even provinces, as those of Savoy and Quito, are found embosomed near the tops of mountains. In general,

* Ulloa, vol. i. † Ibid. ‡ Phil. Trans.

vol. v. p. 152.

|| Ulloa, vol. i.

however, those countries that are most mountainous, are the most barren and uninhabitable.

If we compare the heights of mountains with each other, we shall find that the greatest and highest are found under the Line *. It is thought by some, that the rapidity of the earth's motion in these parts, together with the greatness of the tides there, may have thrown up those stupendous masses of earth. But, be the cause as it may, it is a remarkable fact, that the inequalities of the earth's surface are greatest there. Near the Poles, the earth, indeed, is craggy and uneven enough; but the heights of the mountains there, are very inconsiderable. On the contrary, at the Equator, where Nature seems to sport in the amazing size of all her productions, the plains are extensive; and the mountains remarkably lofty. Some of them are known to rise three miles perpendicular above the bed of the ocean.

To enumerate the most remarkable of these, according to their size, we shall begin with the Andes, of which we have an excellent description by Ulloa, who went thither by command of the king of Spain, in company with the French Academicians, to measure a degree of the meridian. His journey up these

* Buffon. *Passim*.

mountains is too curious not to give an extract from it.

After many incommodious days sailing up the river Guayaquil, he arrived at Caracol, a town situated at the foot of the Andes. Nothing could exceed the inconveniencies which he experienced in this voyage, from the flies and moschitoes (an animal resembling our gnat). "We were the whole day," says he, "in continual motion to keep them off; but at night our torments were extessive. Our gloves, indeed, were some defence to our hands; but our faces were entirely exposed; nor were our cloaths a sufficient defence for the rest of our bodies; for their stings penetrating through the cloth, caused a very painful and fiery itching. One night, in coming to an anchor near a large and handsome house that was uninhabited, we had no sooner seated ourselves in it, than we were attacked on all sides by swarms of moschitoes, so that it was impossible to have one moment's quiet. Those who had covered themselves with cloaths made for this purpose, found not the smallest defence; wherefore, hoping to find some relief in the open fields, they ventured out, though in danger of suffering in a more terrible manner from the serpents. But both places were equally obnoxious. On quitting

this inhospitable retreat, we the next night took up our quarters in an house that was inhabited; the host of which being informed of the terrible manner we had past the night before, he gravely told us, that the house we so greatly complained of, had been forsaken on account of its being the purgatory of a soul. But we had more reason to believe that it was quitted on account of its being the purgatory of the body. After having journeyed for upwards of three days, through boggy roads, in which the mules at every step sunk up to their bellies, we began at length to perceive an alteration in the climate; and having been long accustomed to heat, we now began to feel it grown sensibly colder.

“ It is remarkable, that at Tariguagua we often see instances of the effects of two opposite temperatures, in two persons happening to meet; one of them leaving the plains below, and the other descending from the mountain. The former thinks the cold so severe, that he wraps himself up in all the garments he can procure; while the latter, finds the heat so great, that he is scarce able to bear any cloaths whatsoever. The one thinks the water so cold, that he avoids being sprinkled by it; the other is so delighted with its warmth, that he uses it

as a bath. Nor is the case very different in the same person, who experiences the same diversity of sensation upon his journey up, and upon his return. This difference only proceeds from the change naturally felt at leaving a climate to which one has been accustomed, and coming into another of an opposite temperature.

“ The ruggedness of the road from Tariguagua, leading up the mountain, is not easily described. In some parts, the declivity is so great, that the mules can scarce keep their footing; and in others, the acclivity is equally difficult. The trouble of having people going before to mend the road, the pains arising from the many falls and bruises, and the being constantly wet to the skin, might be supported, were not these inconveniences augmented by the sight of such frightful precipices, and deep abysses, as must fill the mind with ceaseless terror. There are some places where the road is so steep, and yet so narrow, that the mules are obliged to slide down, without making any use of their feet whatsoever. On one side of the rider, in this situation, rises an eminence of several hundred yards; and on the other, an abyss of equal depth; so that if he in the least checks his mule, so as to destroy the equilibrium, they both must unavoidably perish.

“ After having travelled about nine days in this manner, slowly winding along the side of the mountain, we began to find the whole country covered with an hoar frost; and an hut, in which we lay, had ice on it. Having escaped many perils, we at length, after a journey of fifteen days, arrived upon the plain, on the extremity of which stands the city of Quito, the capital of one of the most charming regions upon earth. Here, in the center of the torrid zone, the heat is not only very tolerable, but in some places the cold also is painful. Here they enjoy all the temperature and advantages of perpetual spring; their fields being always covered with verdure, and enamelled with flowers of the most lively colours. However, although this beautiful region be higher than any other country in the world, and although it took up so many days of painful journey in the ascent, it is still overlooked by tremendous mountains; their sides covered with snow, and yet flaming with volcanoes at the top. These seem piled one upon the other, and rise to a most astonishing height, with great coldness. However, at a determined point above the surface of the sea, the congelation is found at the same height in all the mountains. Those parts which are not subject to a continual frost,

have here and there growing upon them a rush, resembling the genista, but much more soft and flexible. Towards the extremity of the part where the rush grows, and the cold begins to encrease, is found a vegetable, with a round bulbous head, which, when dried, becomes of amazing elasticity. Higher up the earth is entirely bare of vegetation, and seems covered with eternal snow. The most remarkable mountains are, that of Cotopaxi, (already described as a volcano) Chimborazo, and Pichincha. Cotopaxi is more than three geographical miles above the surface of the sea: the rest are not much inferior. On the top of the latter was my station for measuring a degree of the meridian; where I suffered particular hardships, from the intenseness of the cold, and the violence of the storms. The sky around was, in general, involved in thick fogs, which, when they cleared away, and the clouds, by their gravity, moved nearer to the surface of the earth, they appeared surrounding the foot of the mountain, at a vast distance below, like a sea, encompassing an island in the midst of it. When this happened, the horrid noises of tempests were heard from beneath, then discharging themselves on Quito, and the neighbouring

country. I saw the lightnings issue from the clouds, and heard the thunders roll far beneath me. All this time, while the tempest was raging below, the mountain top, where I was placed, enjoyed a delightful serenity; the wind was abated; the sky clear; and the enlivening rays of the sun moderated the severity of the cold. However, this was of no very long duration, for the wind returned with all its violence, and with such velocity as to dazzle the sight; whilst my fears were increased by the dreadful concussions of the precipice, and the fall of enormous rocks; the only sounds that were heard in this frightful situation."

Such is the animated picture of these mountains, as given us by this ingenious Spaniard: and I believe the reader will wish that I had made the quotation still longer. A passage over the Alps, or a journey across the Pyrenees, appear petty trips or excursions, in the comparison; and yet these are the most lofty mountains we know of in Europe.

If we compare the Alps with the mountains already described, we shall find them but little more than one half of the height of the former. The Andes, upon being measured by the barometer, are found above three thousand, one

hundred and thirty-six toises or fathoms above the surface of the sea *. Whereas the highest point of the Alps is not above sixteen hundred. The one, in other words, is above three miles high; the other, about a mile and a half. The highest mountains of Asia are, Mount Taurus, Mount Immaus, Mount Caucasus, and the mountains of Japan.—Of these, none equals the Andes in height; although Mount Caucasus, which is the highest of them, makes very near approaches. Father Verbieft tells of a mountain in China, which he measured, and found a mile and a half high †. In Africa, the mountains of the Moon, famous for giving source to the Niger, and the Nile, are rather more noted than known. Of the Pike of Teneriffe, one of the Canary Islands that lie off this coast, we have more certain information. In the year 1727, it was visited by a company of English merchants, who travelled up to the top, where they observed its height, and the volcano on its very summit ‡. They found it an heap of mountains, the highest of which rises over the rest like a sugar-loaf, and gives a name to the whole mass. It is computed to be a mile and an half perpendicular from the surface of the

* Ulloa, vol. i. p. 442.

† Verbieft, alla Chine.

‡ Phil. Transf. vol. v.

sea. Kircher gives us an estimate of the heights of most of the other great mountains in the world; but as he has taken his calculations, in general, from the ancients, or from modern travellers, who had not the art of measuring them, they are quite incredible. The art of taking the heights of places by the barometer, is a new, and an ingenious invention. As the air grows lighter as we ascend, the fluid in the tube rises in due proportion: thus the instrument being properly marked, gives the height with a tolerable degree of exactness; at least enough to satisfy curiosity.

Few of our great mountains have been estimated in this manner; travellers having, perhaps, been deterred, by a supposed impossibility of breathing at the top. However, it has been invariably found, that the air in the highest that our modern travellers have ascended, is not at all too fine for respiration. At the top of the Pike of Teneriff, there was found no other inconvenience from the air, except its coldness; at the top of the Andes, there was no difficulty of breathing perceived. The accounts, therefore, of those who have asserted that they were unable to breathe, although at much less heights, are greatly to be suspected. In fact, it is very natural for mankind to paint those obstacles as

insurmountable, which they themselves have not had the fortitude or perseverance to surmount.

The difficulty and danger of ascending to the tops of mountains, proceeds from other causes, not the thinness of the air. For instance, some of the summits of the Alps have never yet been visited by man. But the reason is, that they rise with such a rugged and precipitate ascent, that they are utterly inaccessible. In some places they appear like a great wall of six or seven hundred feet high; in others, there stick out enormous rocks, that hang upon the brow of the steep, and every moment threaten destruction to the traveller below.

In this manner almost all the tops of the highest mountains are bare and pointed. And this naturally proceeds from their being so continually assaulted by thunders and tempests. All the earthy substances with which they might have been once covered, have for ages been washed away from their summits; and nothing is left remaining, but immense rocks, which no tempest has hitherto been able to destroy.

Nevertheless, time is every day, and every hour, making depredations; and huge fragments are seen tumbling down the precipice, either loosened from the summit by frost or

rains, or struck down by lightening. Nothing can exhibit a more terrible picture than one of these enormous rocks, commonly larger than an house, falling from its height, with a noise louder than thunder, and rolling down the side of the mountain. Doctor Plot tells us of one in particular, which being loosened from its bed, tumbled down the precipice, and was partly shattered into a thousand pieces. Notwithstanding, one of the largest fragments of the same, still preserving its motion, travelled over the plain below, crossed a rivulet in the midst, and at last stopped on the other side of the bank! These fragments, as was said, are often struck off by lightening, and sometimes undermined by rains; but the most usual manner in which they are disunited from the mountain, is by frost: the rains insinuating between the interstices of the mountain, continue there until there comes a frost, and then, when converted into ice, the water swells with an irresistible force, and produces the same effect as gun-powder, splitting the most solid rocks, and thus shattering the summits of the mountain.

But not rocks alone, but whole mountains are, by various causes, disunited from each other. We see, in many parts of the Alps,

amazing clefts, the sides of which so exactly correspond with the opposite, that no doubt can be made of their having been once joined together. At Cajeta *, in Italy, a mountain was split in this manner by an earthquake; and there is a passage opened through it, that appears as if elaborately done by the industry of man. In the Andes these breaches are frequently seen. That at Thermopyle, in Greece, has been long famous. The mountain of the Troglodytes, in Arabia, has thus a passage through it: and that in Savoy, which Nature began, and which Victor Amadeus completed, is an instance of the same kind.

We have accounts of some of these disruptions, immediately after their happening. "In the month of June †, in the year 1714, a part of the mountain of Diableret, in the district of Valais, in France, suddenly fell down, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, the weather being very calm and serene. It was of a conical figure, and destroyed fifty-five cottages in the fall. Fifteen persons, together with about an hundred beasts, were also crushed beneath its ruins, which covered an extent of a good league square. The dust it occasioned, instantly covered all the neighbour-

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 364.

† Hist de l'Accademie
des Sciences, p. 4, an. 1715.

hood in darkness. The heaps of rubbish were more than three hundred feet high. They stopped the current of a river that ran along the plain, which now is formed into several new and deep lakes. There appeared, through the whole of this rubbish, none of those substances that seemed to indicate that this disruption had been made by means of subterraneous fires. Most probably, the base of this rocky mountain was rotted and decayed; and thus fell, without any extraneous violence." In the same manner, in the year 1618, the town of Pleurs, in France, was buried beneath a rocky mountain, at the foot of which it was situated.

These accidents, and many more that might be enumerated of the same kind, have been produced by various causes: by earthquakes, as in the mountain at Cajeta; or by being decayed at the bottom, as at Diableret. But the most general way is, by the foundation of one part of the mountain being hollowed by waters and, thus wanting a support, breaking from the other. Thus it generally has been found in the great chasms in the Alps; and thus it almost always is known in those disruptions of hills, which are known by the name of land-slips. These are nothing more than the sliding down of an higher piece of ground, disrooted from its

situation by subterraneous inundations, and settling itself upon the plain below.

There is not an appearance in all nature that so much astonished our ancestors, as these land-slips. In fact, to behold a large upland, with its houses, its corn, and cattle, at once loosened from its place, and floating, as it were, upon the subjacent water; to behold it quitting its ancient situation, and travelling forward like a ship, in quest of new adventures; this is certainly one of the most extraordinary appearances that can be imagined; and to a people, ignorant of the powers of Nature, might well be considered as a prodigy. Accordingly, we find all our old historians mentioning it as an omen of approaching calamities. In this more enlightened age, however, its cause is very well known; and, instead of exciting ominous apprehensions in the populace, it only gives rise to some very ridiculous law-suits among them, about whose the property shall be; whether the land which has thus slipped, shall belong to the original possessor, or to him upon whose grounds it has encroached and settled. What has been the determination of the judges, is not so well known; but the circumstances of the slips themselves have been minutely enough, and exactly described.

In the lands of Slatberg*, in the kingdom of Ireland, there stood a declivity, gradually ascending for near half a mile. In the year 1713, and on the 10th of March, the inhabitants perceived a crack on its side, somewhat like a furrow made with a plough, which they imputed to the effects of lightening, as there had been thunder the night before. However, on the evening of the same day, they were surprised to hear an hideous confused noise issuing all round from the side of the hill; and their curiosity being raised, they resorted to the place. There, to their amazement, they found the earth, for near five acres, all in gentle motion, and sliding down the hill upon the subjacent plain. This motion continued the remaining part of the day, and the whole night; nor did the noise cease during the whole time; proceeding, probably, from the attrition of the ground beneath. The day following, however, this strange journey down the hill ceased entirely; and above an acre of the meadow below, was found covered with what before composed a part of the declivity.

However, these slips, when a whole mountain's side seems to descend, happen but very rarely. There are some of another kind,

* Phil. Transf. vol. iv. p. 250.

ever; much more common; and, as they are always sudden, much more dangerous. These are snow-slips, well known, and greatly dreaded by travellers. It often happens, that when snow has long been accumulated on the tops and on the sides of mountains, it is borne down the precipice, either by means of tempests, or its own melting. At first, when loosened, the volume in motion is but small; but it gathers as it continues to roll; and, by the time it has reached the habitable parts of the mountain, it is generally grown of enormous bulk. Wherever it rolls, it levels all things in its way; or buries them in unavoidable destruction. Instead of rolling, it sometimes is found to slide along from the top; yet even thus it is generally as fatal as before. Nevertheless, we have had an instance, a few years ago, of a small family in Germany, that lived for above a fortnight beneath one of these snow-slips. Altho' they were buried, during that whole time, in utter darkness, and under a bed of some hundred feet deep, yet they were luckily taken out alive; the weight of the snow being supported by a beam that kept up the roof; and nourishment being supplied them by the milk of an ass, if I remember right, that was buried under the same ruin.

But it is not the parts, alone, that are thus found to subside, whole mountains have been known totally to disappear. Pliny * tells us, that in his own time, the lofty mountain of Cybotus, together with the city of Eurites, were swallowed by an earthquake. The same fate, he says, attended Phlegium, one of the highest mountains in Æthiopia; which, after one night's concussion, was never seen more. In more modern times, a very noted mountain in the Molucca islands, known by the name of the Peak, and remarkable for being seen at a very great distance from sea, was swallowed by an earthquake; and nothing but a lake was left in the place where it stood. Thus, while storms and tempests are levelled against mountains above, earthquakes and waters are undermining them below. All our histories talk of their destruction; and very few new ones (if we except Mount Cenere, and one or two such heaps of cinders) are produced. If mountains, therefore, were of such great utility as some philosophers make them to mankind, it would be a very melancholy consideration that such benefits were diminishing every day. But the truth is, the valleys are fertilized by that earth which is washed from their sides;

* Plin. l. 2, cap. 93.

and the plains become richer, in proportion as the mountains decay.

C H A P. XIII.

Of Water.

I N contemplating nature, we shall often find the same substances possessed of contrary qualities, and producing opposite effects. Air, which liquifies one substance, dries up another. That fire which is seen to burn up the desert, is often found, in other places, to assist the luxuriance of vegetation ; and water, which, next to fire, is the most fluid substance upon earth, nevertheless, gives all other bodies their firmness and durability ; so that every element seems to be a powerful servant, capable either of good or ill, and only awaiting external direction, to become the friend or the enemy of mankind. These opposite qualities, in this substance in particular, have not failed to excite the admiration and enquiry of the curious.

That water is the most fluid penetrating body, next to fire, and the most difficult to confine, is incontestibly proved by a variety of experiments. A vessel through which water cannot pass, may be said to retain any thing. It may

be objected, indeed, that syrups, oils, and honey, leak through some vessels that water cannot pass through; but this is far from being the result of the greater tenuity and fineness of their parts; it is owing to the rosin wherewith the wood of such vessels abounds, which oils and syrups have a power of dissolving; so that these fluids, instead of finding their way, may more properly be said to eat their way through the vessels that contain them. However, water will at last find its way even through these; for it is known to escape through vessels of every substance, glass only excepted. Other bodies may be found to make their way out more readily indeed; as air, when it finds a vent, will escape at once; and quicksilver, because of its weight, quickly penetrates through whatever chinky vessel confines it: but water, tho' it operates more slowly, yet always finds a more certain issue. As, for instance, it is well known that air will not pass through leather; which water will very readily penetrate. Air also may be retained in a bladder; but water will quickly ooze through. And those who drive this to the greatest degree of precision, pretend to say, that it will pass through pores ten times smaller than air can do. Be this as it may, we are very certain that its parts are so small that they have

been actually driven through the pores of gold. This has been proved by the famous Florentine experiment, in which a quantity of water was shut up in an hollow ball of gold, and then pressed with an huge force by screws, during which the fluid was seen to ooze out through the pores of the metal, and to stand, like a dew, upon its surface.

As water is thus penetrating, and its parts thus minute, it may easily be supposed that they enter into the composition of all bodies, both vegetable, animal, and fossil. This every chemist's experience convinces him of; and the mixture is the more obvious, as it can always be separated, by a gentle heat, from those substances with which it had been united. Fire, as was said, will penetrate where water cannot pass; but then it is not so easily to be separated. But there is scarce any substance from which its water cannot be divorced. The parings or filings of lead, tin, and antimony, by distillation, yield water plentifully: the hardest stones, sea salt, nitre, vitriol, and sulphur, are found to consist chiefly of water; into which they resolve by force of fire. "All birds, beasts, and fishes," says Newton, "insects, trees, and vegetables, with their parts, grow from water; and, by putrefaction, return to water again." In short,

almost every substance that we see, owes its texture and firmness to the parts of water that mix with its earth; and, deprived of this fluid, it falls away, into a mass of shapeless dust and ashes.

From hence we see, as was above hinted, that this most fluid body, when mixed with others, gives them consistence and form. Water, by being mixed with earth or ashes, and formed into a vessel, when baked before the fire, becomes a copel, remarkable for this, that it will bear the utmost force of the hottest furnace that art can contrive. So the Chinese earth, of which porcelane is made, is nothing more than an artificial composition of earth and water, united by heat; and which a greater degree of heat could easily separate. Thus we see a body, extremely fluid of itself, in some measure assuming a new nature, by being united with others; we see a body, whose fluid and dissolving qualities are so obvious, giving consistence and hardness to all the substances of the earth.

From considerations of this kind, Thales, and many of the ancient philosophers, held that all things were made of water. In order to confirm this opinion, Helmont made an experiment, by divesting a quantity of earth of all its oils and salts, and then putting this earth,

so prepared, into an earthen pot, which nothing but rain-water could enter, and planting a willow therein; this vegetable, so planted, grew up to a considerable height and bulk, merely from the accidental aspersions of rain-water; while the earth in which it was planted, received no sensible diminution. From this experiment, he concluded, that water was the only nourishment of the vegetable tribe; and that vegetables, being the nourishment of animals, all organized substances, therefore, owed their support and being only to water. But this has been said by Woodward to be all a mistake: for he shews, that water being impregnated with earthy particles, is only the conveyer of such substances into the pores of vegetables, rather than an encreaser of them, by its own bulk: he shews, that water is ever found to afford so much less nourishment, in proportion as it is purified by distillation. A plant in distilled water will not grow so fast as in water not distilled: and if the same be distilled three or four times over, the plant will scarce grow at all, or receive any nourishment from it. So that water, as such, does not seem the proper and only nourishment of vegetables, but only the vehicle thereof, which contains the nutritious particles, and carries them through all parts of the plant. Water,

in its pure state, may suffice to extend or swell the parts of a plant, but affords vegetable matter in a moderate proportion.

However this be, it is agreed on all sides, that water, such as we find it, is far from being a pure simple substance. The most genuine, we know, is mixed with exhalations and dissolutions of various kinds; and no expedient that has been hitherto discovered, is capable of purifying it entirely. If we filter and distill it a thousand times, according to Boerhaave, it will still depose a sediment: and by repeating the process, we may evaporate it entirely away, but can never totally remove its impurities. Some, however, assert, that water, properly distilled, will have no sediment*; and that the little white speck which is found at the bottom of the still, is a substance that enters from without. Kircher used to shew, in his Musæum, a phial of water, that had been kept for fifty years, hermetically sealed†; during which time it deposed no sediment, but continued as trans-

* Hill's History of Fossils. † Hermetically sealing a glass-vessel, means no more than heating the mouth of the phial red hot; and thus when the glass is become pliant, squeezing the mouth together with a pair of pincers, and then twisting it six or seven times round, which effectually closes it up.

parent as when first it was put in. How far, therefore, it may be brought to a state of purity by distillation, is unknown; but we very well know, that all such water as we every where see, is a bed in which plants, minerals, and animals, are all found confusedly floating together.

Rain-water, which is a fluid of Nature's own distilling, and which has been raised so high by evaporation, is, nevertheless, a very mixed and impure substance. Exhalations of all kinds, whether salts, sulphurs, or metals, make a part of its substance, and tend to increase its weight. If we gather the water that falls, after a thunder-clap, in a sultry summer's day, and let it settle, we shall find a real salt sticking at the bottom. In winter, however, its impure mixtures are fewer; but still may be separated by distillation. But as to that which is generally caught pouring from the tops of houses, it is particularly foul, being impregnated with the smoak of the chimnies, the vapour of the slates or tiles, and with other impurities that birds and animals may have deposited there. Besides, though it should be supposed free from all these, it is mixed with a quantity of air, which, after being kept for some time, will be seen to separate.

Spring-water is next in point of purity. This, according to Doctor Halley, is collected from the air itself; which being sated with water, and coming to be condensed by the evening's cold, is driven against the tops of the mountains, where being condensed, and collected, it trickles down by the sides, into the cavities of the earth; and running for a while underground, bubbles up in fountains upon the plain. This having made but a short circulation, has generally had no long time to dissolve or imbibe any foreign substances by the way.

River-water is generally more foul than the former. Wherever the stream flows, it receives a tincture from its channel. Plants, minerals, and animals, all contribute their share to add to its impurities: so that such as live at the mouths of great rivers, generally are subject to all those disorders which contaminated and unwholesome waters are known to produce. Of all the river-water in the world, that of the Indus, and the Thames, are said to be most light and wholesome.

The impurest fresh water that we know, is that of stagnating pools and lakes, which, in summer, may be more properly considered as a jelly of floating insects, than a collection of

water. In this, millions of little reptiles, undisturbed by any current, which might crush their frames to pieces, breed and engender. The whole teems with shapeless life; and only grows more fruitful by encreasing putrefaction.

Of the purity of all these waters, the lightness, and not the transparency, ought to be the test. Water may be extremely clear and beautiful to the eye, and yet very much impregnated with mineral principles. In fact, sea-water is the most transparent of any, and yet is well known to contain a large mixture of salt and bitumen. On the contrary, those waters which are lightest, have the fewest dissolutions floating in them; and may, therefore, be the most useful for all the purposes of life. But, after all, though much has been said upon this subject, and although waters have been weighed with great assiduity, to determine their degree of salubrity, yet neither this, nor their curdling with soap, nor any other philosophical standard whatsoever, will answer the purposes of true information. Experience alone ought to determine the useful, or noxious qualities, of every spring; and experience assures us, that different kinds of water are adapted to different constitutions. An incontestible proof of this, are the many medicinal springs throughout the

world, whose peculiar benefits are known to the natives of their respective countries. These are of various kinds, according to the different minerals with which they are impregnated; hot, saline, sulphureous, bituminous, and oily. But the account of these will come most properly under that of the several minerals by which they are produced.

After all, therefore, we must be contented with but an impure mixture for our daily beverage. And yet, perhaps, this very mixture may often be more serviceable to our health than that of a purer kind. We know that it is so with regard to vegetables: and why not, also, in general, to man? Be this as it will, if we are desirous of having water in its greatest purity, we are ordered, by the curious in this particular, to distill it from snow, gathered upon the tops of the highest mountains, and to take none but the outer and superficial part thereof. This we must be satisfied to call pure water; but even this is far short of the pure unmixed philosophical element; which, in reality, is no where to be found.

As water is thus mixed with foreign matter, and often the repository of minute animals, or vegetable seeds, we need not be surprized that, when carried to sea, it is always found to pu-

trefy. But we must not suppose that it is the element itself, which thus grows putrid, and offensive, but the substances with which it is impregnated. It is true, the utmost precautions are taken to destroy all vegetable and animal substances that may have previously been lodged in it, by boiling: but, notwithstanding this, there are some that will still survive the operation; and others, that find their way during the time of its stowage. Seamen, therefore, assure us, that their water is generally found to putrefy twice, at least, and sometimes three times, in a long voyage. In about a month after it has been at sea, when the bung is taken out of the cask, it sends up a noisome and dangerous vapour, which would take fire upon the application of a candle *. The whole body of the water then is found replete with little worm-like insects, that float, with great briskness, through all its parts. These generally live for about a couple of days; and then dying, by depositing their spoils, for a while encrease the putrefaction. After a time, the heavier parts of these sinking to the bottom, the lighter float, in a scum, at the top; and this is what the mariners call, the water's purging itself. There are still, however, another

* Phil. Transf. vol. v. part ii. p. 71.

race of insects, which are bred, very probably, from the spoils of the former; and produce, after some time, similar appearances: these dying, the water is then thought to change no more. However, it very often happens, especially in hot climates, that nothing can drive these nauseous insects from the ship's store of water. They often encrease to a very disagreeable and frightful size, so as to deter the mariner, though parching with thirst, from tasting that cup which they have contaminated.

This water, as thus described, therefore, is a very different fluid from that simple elementary substance upon which philosophical theories have been founded; and concerning the nature of which there have been so many disputes. Elementary water is no way compounded; but is without taste, smell, or colour; and incapable of being discerned by any of the senses, except the touch. This is the famous dissolvent of the chymists, into which, as they have boasted, they can reduce all bodies; and which makes up all other substances, only by putting on a different disguise. In some forms, it is fluid, transparent, and evasive of the touch; in others, hard, firm, and elastic. In some, it is stiffened by cold; in others, dissolved by fire. According to them, it only assumes external shapes from

accidental causes ; but the mountain is as much a body of water as the cake of ice that melts on its brow ; and even the philosopher himself, is composed of the same materials with the cloud or meteor which he contemplates.

Speculation seldom rests when it begins. Others, disallowing the universality of this substance, will not allow that in a state of nature there is any such thing as water at all. What assumes the appearance, say they, is nothing more than melted ice. Ice is the real element of Nature's making ; and when found in a state of fluidity, it is then in a state of violence. All substances are naturally hard ; but some more readily melt with heat than others. It requires a great heat to melt iron ; a smaller heat will melt copper : silver, gold, tin, and lead, melt with smaller still : ice, which is a body like the rest, melts with a very moderate warmth ; and quicksilver, melts with the smallest warmth of all. Water, therefore, is but ice kept in continual fusion ; and still returning to its former state, when the heat is taken away. Between these opposite opinions, the controversy has been carried on with great ardour ; and much has been written on both sides : and yet, when we come to examine the debate, it will probably terminate in this question, whether cold or heat

first began their operations upon water? This is a fact of very little importance, if known; and what is more, it is a fact we can never know.

Indeed, if we examine into the operations of cold and heat upon water, we shall find that they produce somewhat similar effects. Water dilates in its bulk, by heat, to a very considerable degree; and, what is more extraordinary, it is likewise dilated by cold, in the same manner.

If water be placed over a fire, it grows gradually larger in bulk, as it becomes hot, until it begins to boil; after which, no art can either encrease its bulk, or its heat. By encreasing the fire, indeed, it may be more quickly evaporated away; but its heat, and its bulk, still continue the same. By the expanding of this fluid by heat, philosophers have found a way to determine the warmth, or the coldness of other bodies: for if put into a glass tube, by its swelling and rising therein, it shews the quantity of heat in the body to which it is applied; by its contracting, and sinking, it shews the absence of the same. Instead of using water in this instrument, which is called a thermometer, they now make use of spirit of wine, which is not apt to freeze, and which is endued even with a

greater expansion, by heat, than water. The instrument consists of nothing more than a hollow ball of glass, with a long tube growing out of it. This being partly filled with spirits of wine, tinged red, so as to be seen when it rises, the ball is plunged into boiling water, which making the spirit within expand and rise in the tube, the water marks the greatest height to which it ascends; at this point the tube is to be broken off, and then hermetically sealed, by melting the glass with a blow-pipe: a scale being placed by the side, completes the thermometer. Now as the fluid expands or condenses with heat or cold, it will rise and fall in the tube in proportion; and the degree or quantity of ascent or descent will be seen in the scale.

No fire, as was said, can make water hotter, after it begins to boil. We can, therefore, at any time be sure of an equable certain heat; which is that of boiling water, which is invariably the same. The certainty of such an heat is not less useful than the instrument that measures it. It affords a standard, fixed, degree of heat over the whole world; boiling water being as hot in Greenland, as upon the coasts of Guinea. One fire is more intense than another; of heat there are various degrees; but boiling water is an heat every where the same, and easily procurable.

As heat thus expands water, so cold, when it is violent enough to freeze the same, produces exactly the same effect, and expands it likewise. Thus water is acted upon in the same manner by two opposite qualities; being dilated by both. As a proof that it is dilated by cold, we have only to observe the ice which floats on the surface of a pond, which it would not do were it not dilated, and grown more bulky, by freezing, than the water, which remains unfrozen. Mr. Boyle, however, put the matter past a doubt, by a variety of experiments*. Having poured a proper quantity of water into a strong earthen vessel, he exposed it, uncovered, to the open air, in frosty nights; and observed, that continually the ice reached higher than the water, before it was frozen. He filled also a tube with water, and stopped both ends with wax: the water, when frozen, was found to push out the stopples from both ends; and a rod of ice appeared at each end of the tube, which shewed how much it was swollen by the cold within.

From hence, therefore, we may be very certain of the cold's dilating of the water; and experience also shews that, the force of this expansion has been found as great as any which

* Boyle, vol. i. p. 610.

heat has been found to produce. The touch-hole of a strong gun-barrel being stopped, and a plug of iron forcibly driven into the muzzle, after the barrel had been filled with water, it was placed in a mixture of ice and salt; the plug, though soldered to the barrel, at first gave way, but being fixed in more firmly, within a quarter of an hour the gun-barrel burst with a loud noise, and blew up the cover of the box wherein it lay. Such is its force in an ordinary experiment. But it has been known to burst cannons, filled with water, and then left to freeze; for the cold congealing the water, and the ice swelling, it became irresistible. The bursting of rocks, by frost, which is frequent enough in the Northern climates, and is sometimes seen in our own, is an equal proof of the expansion of congealed water. For having, by some means insinuated itself into the body of the rock, it has remained there till the cold was sufficient to affect it by congelation. But when once frozen, no obstacle is able to confine it from dilating; and, if it cannot otherwise find room, the rock must burst asunder.

This alteration in the bulk of water, might have served as a proof that it was capable of being compressed into a narrower space than it occupied before; but, till of late, water was

held to be incompressible. The general opinion was, that no art whatsoever could squeeze it into a narrower compass; that no power on earth, for instance, could crush a pint of water into a vessel that held an hair's breadth less than a pint. And this, said they, appears from the famous Florentine experiment; where the water, rather than suffer compressure, was seen to ooze out through the pores of the solid metal; and, at length, making a cleft in the side, spun out with great vehemence. But later trials have proved that water is very compressible, and partakes of that elasticity which every other body possesses in some degree. Indeed, had not mankind been dazzled by the brilliancy of one inconclusive experiment, there were numerous reasons to convince them of its having the same properties with other substances. Ice, which is water in another state, is very elastic. A stone flung slantingly along the surface of a pond, bounds from the water several times; which shews it to be elastic also. But the trials of Mr. Canton have put this past all doubt; which being somewhat similar to those of the great Boyle, who pressed it with weights properly applied, carry sufficient conviction.

What has been hitherto related, is chiefly applicable to the element of water alone; but its fluidity is a property that it possesses in com-

mon with several other substances, in other respects greatly differing from it. That quality which gives rise to the definition of a fluid, namely, that its parts are in a continual intestine motion, seems extremely applicable to water. What the shapes of those parts are, it would be vain to attempt to discover. Every trial only shews the futility of the attempt; all we find is, that they are extremely minute; and that they roll over each other with the greatest ease. Some, indeed, from this property alone, have not hesitated to pronounce them globular; and we have, in all our hydrostatical books, pictures of these little globes in a state of sliding and rolling over each other. But all this is merely the work of imagination; we know that substances of any kind, reduced very small, assume a fluid appearance, somewhat resembling that of water. Mr. Boyle, after finely powdering and sifting a little dry powder of plaister of Paris, put it in a vessel over the fire, where it soon began to boil like water, exhibiting all the motions and appearances of a boiling liquor. Although but a powder, the parts of which we know are very different from each other, and just as accident has formed them, yet it heaved in great waves, like water. Upon

agitation, an heavy body will sink to the bottom, and a light one emerge to the top. There is no reason, therefore, to suppose the figure of the parts of water round, since we see their fluidity very well imitated by a composition, the parts of which are of various forms and sizes. The shape of the parts of water, therefore, we must be content to continue ignorant of. All we know is, that earth, air, and fire, all conduce to separate the parts from each other.

Earthy substances divide the parts from each other, and keep them asunder. This division may be so great, that the water will entirely lose its fluidity thereby. Mud, potter's clay, and dried bricks, are but so many different combinations of earth and water; each substance in which the parts of water are most separated from each other, appearing to be the most dry. In some substances, indeed, where the parts of water are greatly divided, as in porcelane, for instance, it is no easy matter to recover and bring them together again; but they continue in a manner fixed and united to the manufactured clay. This circumstance it was, which led Doctor Cheney into a very peculiar strain of thinking. He suspected that the quantity of water, on the surface of the earth, was daily decreasing. For, says he, some parts of it are

continually joined to vegetable, animal, and mineral substances, which no art can again recover. United with these, the water loses its fluidity; for if, continues he, we separate a few particles of any fluid, and fasten them to a solid body, or keep them asunder, one from another, they will be fluid no longer. To produce fluidity, a considerable number of such particles are required; but here they are close, and destitute of their natural properties. Thus, according to him, the world is growing every day harder and harder, and the earth firmer and firmer; and there may come a time when every object around us may be stiffened in universal frigidity! However, we have causes enough of anxiety in this world already, not to add this preposterous concern to the number.

That air also contributes to divide the parts of water, we can have no manner of doubt of; some have even disputed whether water be not capable of being turned into air. However, though this must not be allowed, it must be granted, that it may be turned into a substance which greatly resembles air (as we have seen in the experiment of the *œolpile*) with all its properties; except that, by cold, this new made air may be condensed again into water.

But of all the substances which tend to divide

the parts of water, fire is the most powerful. Water, when heated into steam, acquires such force, and the parts of it tend to fly off from each other with such violence, that no earthly substance we know of, is strong enough to confine them. A single drop of water, converted into steam, has been found capable of raising a weight of twenty tons; and would have raised twenty thousand, were the vessel confining it sufficiently strong, and the fire below increased in proportion.

From this easy yielding of its parts to external pressure, arises the art of determining the bulk of bodies by plunging them in water; with all the other useful discoveries in that part of natural philosophy, called hydrostatics. The laws of this science, which Archimedes first began, and Pascal, with some other of the moderns, brought to perfection, rather belongs to experimental than to natural history. However, I will take leave to mention some of the most striking paradoxes in this branch of science, which are as well confirmed by experiment, as rendered universal by theory. It would, indeed, be unpardonable, while discoursing on the properties of water, to omit giving some account of the manner in which it sustains such immense bulks as we see floating upon its soft and yielding surface: how some bodies, that are known

to sink at one time, swim with ease, if their surface be enlarged; how the heaviest body, even gold itself, may be made to swim upon water; and how the lightest, such as cork, shall remain sunk at the bottom: how the pouring in of a single quart of water, will burst an hoghead hooped with iron: and how it ascends, in pipes, from the valley, to travel over the mountain: these are circumstances that are at first surprising; but, upon a slight consideration, lose their wonder.

* In order to conceive the manner in which all these wonders are effected, we must begin by observing that water is possessed of an invariable property, which has not hitherto been mentioned; that of always keeping its surface level and even. Winds, indeed, may raise it into waves; or art spurt it up in fountains; but ever, when left to itself, it sinks into a smooth even surface, of which no one part is higher than another. If I should pour water, for instance, into the arm of a pipe of the shape of the letter U, the fluid would rise in the other arm just to the same height; because, otherwise, it would not find its level, which it invariably maintains. A pipe

* In the above sketch, the manner of demonstrating used by Monsieur D'Alambert is made use of, as the most obvious, and the most satisfactory. Vide *Essai sur, &c.*

bending from one hill down into the valley, and rising by another, may be considered as a tube of this kind, in which the water, sinking in one arm, rises to maintain its level in the other. And upon this principle all water-pipes depend; which can never raise the water higher than the fountain from which they proceed.

Again, let us suppose for a moment, that the arms of the pipe already mentioned, may be made long or short at pleasure; and let us still further suppose, that there is some obstacle at the bottom of it, which prevents the water poured into one arm, from rising in the other. Now it is evident, that this obstacle at the bottom will sustain a pressure from the water in one arm, equal to what would make it rise in the other; and this pressure will be great, in proportion as the arm filled with water is tall. We may, therefore, generally conclude, that the bottom of every vessel is pressed by a force, in proportion to the height of the water in that vessel. For instance, if the vessel filled with water be forty feet high, the bottom of that vessel will sustain such a pressure as would raise the same water forty feet high, which is very great. From hence we see how extremely apt to burst our pipes that convey water to the city are; for descending from an hill of more than

forty feet high, they are pressed by the water contained in them, with a force equal to what would raise it more than forty feet high; and that this is sometimes able to burst a wooden pipe, we can have no room to doubt of.

Still recurring to our pipe, let us suppose one of its arms ten times as thick as the other; this will produce no effect whatsoever upon the obstacle below, which we supposed hindering its rise in the other arm; because, how thick soever the pipe may be, its contents would only rise to its own level; and it will, therefore, press the obstacle with a force equal thereto. We may, therefore, universally conclude, that the bottom of any vessel is pressed by its water, not as it is broad or narrow, but in proportion as it is high. Thus the water contained in a vessel not thicker than my finger, presses its bottom as forcibly as the water contained in an hoghead of an equal height; and, if we made holes in the bottoms of both, the water would burst out as forceful from the one as the other. Hence we may, with great ease, burst an hoghead with a single quart of water; and it has been often done. We have only*, for this, to place an hoghead on one end, filled with water: we then bore an hole in its top, into which we plant a narrow

* Nollet's Lectures.

tin pipe, of about thirty feet high: by pouring a quart of water into this, at the top, as it continues to rise higher in the pipe, it will press more forcibly on the bottom and sides of the hoghead below, and at last burst it.

Still returning to our simple instrument of demonstration. If we suppose the obstacle at the bottom of the pipe to be moveable, so as that the force of the water can push it up into the other arm; such a body is quicksilver, for instance. Now, it is evident, that the weight of water weighing down upon this quicksilver in one arm, will at last press it up in the other arm; and will continue to press it upwards, until the fluid in both arms be upon a par. So that here we actually see quicksilver, the heaviest substance in the world, except gold, floating upon water, which is but a very light substance.

When we see water thus capable of sustaining quicksilver, we need not be surprized that it is capable of floating much lighter substances, ships, animals, or timber. When any thing floats upon water, we always see that a part of it sinks in the same. A cork, a ship, a buoy, each buries itself a bed on the surface of the water; this bed may be considered as so much water displaced; the water will, therefore, lose

so much of its own weight as is equal to the weight of that bed of water which it displaces. If the body be heavier than a similar bulk of water, it will sink; if lighter, it will swim. Universally, therefore, every body that is plunged in water, loses as much of its weight as is equal to the weight of a body of water of its own bulk. Some light bodies, therefore, such as cork, lose all their weight, and therefore swim, because their bulk of water is heavier than they; other more ponderous bodies sink, because they are heavier than their bulk of water.

Upon this simple theorem entirely depends the art of weighing metals hydrostatically. I have a guinea, for instance, and desire to know whether it be pure gold: I have weighed it in the usual way with another guinea, and find it exactly of the same weight, but still I have some suspicion, from its greater bulk, that it is not pure. In order to determine this, I have nothing more to do than to weigh it in water with that same guinea that I know to be good, and of the same weight; and this will instantly shew the difference; for the true ponderous metal will sink, and the false bulky one will be sustained in proportion to the greatness of its surface. Those whose business it is to examine the purity of metals, have a balance made for this purpose,

by which they can precisely determine which is most ponderous, or, as it is expressed, which has the greatest specific gravity. Seventy-one pound and an half of quicksilver is found to be equal in bulk to an hundred pound weight of gold. In the same proportion, sixty of lead, fifty-four of silver, forty-seven of copper, forty-five of brass, forty-two of iron, and thirty-nine of tin, are each equal to an hundred pound of the same most ponderous of all metals.

This method of precisely determining the purity of gold, by weighing in water, was first discovered by Archimedes, to whom mankind have been indebted for many of the most useful discoveries. Hiero, king of Sicily, having sent a certain quantity of gold to be made into a crown, the workman, it seems, kept a part for his own use, and supplied the deficiency with a baser metal. His fraud was suspected by the king, but could not be proved; till applying to Archimedes, he weighed the crown in water; and, by this method, directly informed the king of the quantity of gold which was taken away.

It has been said, that all fluids endeavour to preserve their level; and, likewise, that a body pressing on the surface, tended to destroy that level. From hence, therefore, it will easily be

inferred, that the deeper any body sinks, the greater will be the resistance of the depressed fluid beneath. It will be asked, therefore, as the resistance encreases in proportion as the body descends, how comes the body, after it is got a certain way, to sink at all? The answer is obvious. From the fluid above it pressing it down with almost as great a force as the fluid beneath presses it up. Take away, by any art, the pressure of the fluid from above, and let only the resistance of the fluid from below be suffered to act, and after the body is got down very deep, the resistance will be insuperable. To give an instance: a small hole opens in the bottom of a ship at sea, forty feet we will suppose below the surface of the water; through this the water bursts up with great violence; I attempt to stop it with my hand, but it pushes the hand violently away. Here the hand is, in fact, a body attempting to sink upon water, at a depth of forty feet, with the pressure from above taken away. The water, therefore, will overcome my strength; and will continue to burst in till it has got to its level: if I should then dive into the hold, and clap my hand upon the opening, as before, I should perceive no force acting against my hand at all, for the water above presses the hand as much down against the hole, as the water without

presses it upward. For this reason, also, when we dive to the bottom of the water, we sustain a very great pressure from above, it is true, but it is counteracted by the pressure from below; and the whole acting uniformly on the surface of the body, wraps us close round without injury.

As I have deviated thus far, I will just mention one or two properties more, which water, and all such like fluids, is found to possess. And first, their ascending in vessels which are emptied of air, as in our common pumps for instance. The air, however, being the agent in this case, we must previously examine the properties of that, before we undertake the explanation. The other property to be mentioned is, that of their ascending in small capillary tubes. This is one of the most extraordinary and inscrutable appearances in nature. Glass tubes may be drawn, by means of a lamp, as fine as an hair; still preserving their hollow within. If one of these be planted in a vessel of water, or spirit of wine, the liquor will immediately be seen to ascend; and it will rise higher, in proportion as the tube is smaller; a foot, two feet, and more. How does this come to pass? Is the air the cause? No: the liquor rises, although the air be taken away. Is attraction the cause?

No : for quicksilver does not ascend, which it otherwise would. Many have been the theories of experimental philosophers to explain this property. Such as are fond of travelling in the regions of conjecture, may consult Hawksbee, Morgan, Jurin, or Watson, who have examined the subject with great minuteness. Hitherto, however, nothing but doubts instead of knowledge have been the result of their enquiries. It will not, therefore, become us to enter into the minuteness of the enquiry, when we have so many greater wonders to call our attention away.

C H A P. XIV.

Of the Origin of Rivers.

T H E sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and pants for the place from whence he arose. All things are filled with labour, and man cannot utter it. All rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. Unto the place whence the rivers come, thither they return again. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing *. Thus speaks the wisest of the Jews.

* Ecclesiastes, chap. i. v. 5, 7, 8.

And, at so early a period was the curiosity of man employed in observing these great circulations of nature. Every eye attempted to explain those appearances; and every philosopher who has long thought upon the subject, seems to give a peculiar solution. The enquiry whence rivers are produced; whence they derive those unceasing stores of water, which continually enrich the world with fertility and verdure; has been variously considered; and divided the opinions of mankind, more than any other topic in natural history.

In this contest, the various champions may be classed under two leaders, Mr. De La Hire, who contends that rivers must be supplied from the sea, strained through the pores of the earth; and Doctor Halley, who has endeavoured to demonstrate, that the clouds alone are sufficient for the supply. Both sides have brought in mathematics to their aid; and have shewn, that long and laborious calculations can at any time be made, to obscure both sides of a question.

De La Hire * begins his proofs, that rain-water, evaporated from the sea, is insufficient for the production of rivers; by shewing, that rain never penetrates the surface of the earth above sixteen inches. From thence he infers,

* Hist. de l'Accad, 1713, p. 56.

that it is impossible for it, in many cases, to sink so as to be found at such considerable depths below. Rain-water, he grants, is often seen to mix with rivers, and to swell their currents; but a much greater part of it evaporates away. In fact, continues he, if we suppose the earth every where covered with water, evaporation alone would be sufficient to carry off two feet nine inches of it in a year: and yet, we very well know, that scarce nineteen inches of rain-water falls in that time; so that evaporation would carry off a much greater quantity than is ever known to descend. The small quantity of rain-water that falls is therefore but barely sufficient for the purposes of vegetation. Two leaves of a fig-tree have been found, by experiment, to imbibe from the earth, in five hours and an half, two ounces of water. This implies the great quantity of fluid that must be exhausted in the maintainance of one single plant. Add to this, that the waters of the river Rungis will, by calculation, rise to fifty inches; and the whole country from whence they are supplied, never receives fifty inches, in the year, by rain. Besides this, there are many salt springs, which are known to proceed immediately from the sea, and are subject to its flux and reflux. In short, wherever we dig beneath

the surface of the earth, except in a very few instances, water is to be found; and it is by this subterraneous water, that springs and rivers, nay, a great part of vegetation itself, is supported. It is this subterraneous water, which is raised into steam, by the internal heat of the earth, that feeds plants. It is this subterraneous water that distills through its interstices; and there cooling, forms fountains. It is this that, by the addition of rains, is encreased into rivers; and pours plenty over the whole earth.

On the other side of the question *, it is asserted, that the vapours which are exhaled from the sea, and driven by the winds upon land, are more than sufficient to supply not only plants with moisture, but also to furnish a sufficiency of water to the greatest rivers. For this purpose, an estimate has been made of the quantity of water emptied at the mouths of the greatest rivers; and of the quantity also raised from the sea by evaporation; and it has been found, that the latter by far exceeds the former. This calculation was made by Mr. Mariotte. By him it was found, upon receiving such rain as fell in a year, in a proper vessel, fitted for that purpose, that, one year with another, there might fall about twenty inches of water upon

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 128.

the surface of the earth, throughout Europe. It was also computed, that the river Seine, from its source to the city of Paris, might cover an extent of ground, that would supply it annually with above seven billions of cubic feet of this water, formed by evaporation. But, upon computing the quantity which passed through the arches of one of its bridges in a year, it was found to amount only to two hundred and eighty millions of cubic feet, which is not above the sixth part of the former number. Hence, therefore, it appears, that this river may receive a supply brought to it by the evaporated waters of the sea, six times greater than what it gives back to the sea by its current; and, therefore, evaporation is more than sufficient for maintaining the greatest rivers; and supplying the purposes also of vegetation.

In this manner the sea supplies sufficient humidity to the air for furnishing the earth with all necessary moisture. One part of its vapours fall upon its own bosom, before they arrive upon land. Another part is arrested by the sides of mountains, and is compelled, by the rising stream of air, to mount upward towards the summits. Here it is presently precipitated, dripping down by the crannies of the stone. In some places, entering into the caverns of the

mountain, it gathers in those receptacles, which being once filled, all the rest overflows; and breaking out by the sides of the hills, forms single springs. Many of these run down by the vallies, or guts between the ridges of the mountain, and coming to unite, form little rivulets or brooks; many of these meeting in one common valley, and gaining the plain ground, being grown less rapid, become a river; and many of these uniting, make such vast bodies of water as the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Danube.

There is still a third part, which falls upon the lower grounds, and furnishes plants with their wonted supply. But the circulation does not rest even here; for it is again exhaled into vapour by the action of the sun; and again returned to that great mass of waters whence it first arose. This, adds Doctor Halley, seems the most reasonable hypothesis; and much more likely to be true, than that of those who derive all springs from the filtering of the sea waters through certain imaginary tubes or passages within the earth; since it is well known, that the greatest rivers have their most copious fountains the most remote from the sea *.

This seems the most adopted opinion; and yet, after all, it is still pressed with great diffi-

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 128.

culties; and there is still room to look out for a better theory. The perpetuity of many springs, which always yield the same quantity when the least rain or vapour is afforded, as well as when the greatest, is a strong objection. Derham * mentions a spring at Upminster, which he could never perceive by his eye to be diminished, in the greatest droughts, even when all the ponds in the country, as well as an adjoining brook, have been dry for several months together. In the rainy seasons also, it was never overflowed; except sometimes, perhaps, for an hour or so, upon the immiffion of the external rains. He, therefore, juftly enough concludes, that had this spring its origin from rain or vapour, there would be found an encrease or decrease of its water, corresponding to the causes of its production.

Thus the reader, after having been tossed from one hypothesis to another, must at last be contented to settle in conscious ignorance. All that has been written upon this subject, affords him rather something to say, than something to think; something rather for others than for himself. Varenus, indeed, although he is at a loss for the origin of rivers, is by no means so as to their formation. He is pretty positive that all

* Derham Physico Theol.

rivers are artificial. He boldly asserts, that their channels have been originally formed by the industry of man. His reasons are, that when a new spring breaks forth, the water does not make itself a new channel, but spreads over the adjacent land. Thus, says he, men are obliged to direct its course; or, otherwise, Nature would never have found one. He enumerates many rivers, that are certainly known, from history, to have been dug by men. He alledges, that no salt-water rivers are found, because men did not want salt-water; and as for salt, that was procurable at a less expence than digging a river for it. However, it costs a speculative man but a small expence of thinking to form such an hypothesis. It may, perhaps, engross the reader's patience to detain him longer upon it.

Nevertheless, though philosophy be thus ignorant, as to the production of rivers, yet the laws of their motion, and the nature of their currents, have been very well explained. The Italians have particularly distinguished themselves in this respect; and it is chiefly to them that we are indebted for the improvement*.

All rivers have their source either in mountains, or elevated lakes; and it is in their descent

* S. Guglielmini della Natura de Fiumi. Passim,

from these, that they acquire that velocity which maintains their future current. At first their course is generally rapid and headlong; but it is retarded in its journey, both by the continual friction against its banks, by the many obstacles it meets to divert its stream, and by the plains generally becoming more level as it approaches towards the sea.

If this acquired velocity be quite spent, and the plain through which the river passes is entirely level, it will, notwithstanding, still continue to run from the perpendicular pressure of the water, which is always in exact proportion to the depth. This perpendicular pressure is nothing more than the weight of the upper waters pressing the lower out of their places, and, consequently, driving them forward, as they cannot recede against the stream. As this pressure is greatest in the deepest parts of the river, so we generally find the middle of the stream most rapid; both because it has the greatest motion thus communicated by the pressure, and the fewest obstructions from the banks on either side.

Rivers thus set into motion are almost always found to make their own beds. Where they find the bed elevated, they wear its substance away, and deposit the sediment in the next hol-

low, so as in time to make the bottom of their channels even. On the other hand, the water is continually gnawing and eating away the banks on each side; and this with more force as the current happens to strike more directly against them. By these means, it always has a tendency to render them more strait and parallel to its own course. Thus it continues to rectify its banks, and enlarge its bed; and, consequently, to diminish the force of its stream, till there becomes an equilibrium between the force of the water, and the resistance of its banks, upon which both will remain without any further mutation. And it is happy for man that bounds are thus put to the erosion of the earth by water; and that we find all rivers only dig and widen themselves but to a certain degree *.

In those plains † and large vallies where great rivers flow, the bed of the river is usually lower than any part of the valley. But it often happens, that the surface of the water is higher than many of the grounds that are adjacent to the banks of the stream. If, after inundations, we take a view of some rivers, we shall find their banks appear above water, at a time that all

* Guglielmini della Natura de Fiumi. Passim. † Buffon. De Fleuves. Passim, vol. ii.

the adjacent valley is overflown. This proceeds from the frequent depofition of mud, and fuch like fubftances, upon the banks, by the rivers frequently overflowing; and thus, by degrees, they become elevated above the plain; and the water is often feen higher alfo.

Rivers, as every body has feen, are always broadest at the mouth; and grow narrower towards their fource. But what is lefs known, and probably more deferving curiofity, is, that they run in a more direct channel as they immediately leave their fources; and that their finuofities and turnings become more numerous as they proceed. It is a certain fign among the favages of North America, that they are near the fea when they find the rivers winding, and every now and then changing their direction. And this is even now become an indication to the Europeans themfelves, in their journies through thofe tracklefs forefts. As thofe finuofities, therefore, encrease as the river approaches the fea, it is not to be wondered at, that they fometimes divide, and thus difembogue by different channels. The Danube difembogues into the Euxine by feven mouths; the Nile, by the fame number; and the Wolga, by feventy.

The currents * of rivers are to be estimated very differently from the manner in which those writers who have given us mathematical theories on this subject, represent them. They found their calculations upon the surface, being a perfect plain, from one bank to the other: but this is not the actual state of Nature; for rivers, in general, rise in the middle; and this convexity is greatest in proportion as the rapidity of the stream is greater. Any person, to be convinced of this, need only lay his eye as nearly as he can on a level with the stream, and looking across to the opposite bank, he will perceive the river in the midst to be elevated considerably above what it is at the edges. This rising, in some rivers, is often found to be three feet high; and is ever increased, in proportion to the rapidity of the stream. In this case, the water in the midst of the current loses a part of its weight, from the velocity of its motion; while that at the sides, for the contrary reason, sinks lower. It sometimes, however, happens, that this appearance is reversed; for when tides are found to flow up with violence against the natural current of the water, the greatest rapidity is then found at the sides of the river, as the

* Buffon. De Fleuves. Passim, vol. ii,

water there least resists the influx from the sea. On those occasions, therefore, the river presents a concave rather than a convex surface: and, as in the former case, the middle waters rose in a ridge; in this case, they sink in a furrow.

The stream in all rivers is more rapid in proportion as its channel is diminished. For instance, it will be much swifter where it is ten yards broad, than where it is twenty; for the force behind still pushing the water forward, when it comes to the narrow part, it must make up by velocity what it wants in room.

It often happens that the stream of a river is opposed by one of its jutting banks, by an island in the midst, the arches of a bridge, or some such obstacle. This produces, not unfrequently, a back current; and the water having past the arch with great velocity, pushes the water on each side of its direct current. This produces a side current, tending to the bank; and not unfrequently a whirlpool; in which a large body of waters are circulated in a kind of cavity, sinking down in the middle. The central point of the whirlpool is always lowest, because it has the least motion: the other parts are supported, in some measure, by the violence of theirs; and, consequently, rise higher as their motion is greater; so that towards the extremity of the

whirlpool must be higher than towards the center.

If the stream of a river be stopped at the surface, and yet be free below; as for instance, if it be laid over by a bridge of boats, there will then be a double current; the water at the surface will flow back, while that at the bottom will proceed with encreased velocity. It often happens that the current at the bottom is swifter than at the top, when, upon violent land-floods, the weight of waters towards the source, presses the waters at the bottom, before it has had time to communicate its motion to the surface. However, in all other cases, the surface of the stream is swifter than the bottom, as it is not retarded by rubbing over the bed of the river.

It might be supposed that bridges, dams, and other obstacles in the current of a river, would retard its total velocity. But the difference they make is very inconsiderable. The water, by these stoppages, gets an elevation above the object; which, when it has surmounted, it gives a velocity that recompences the former delay. Islands and turnings also retard the course of the stream but very inconsiderably; any cause which diminishes the quantity of the water, most sensibly diminishes the force and the velocity of the stream.

An encrease * of water in the bed of the river, always encreases its rapidity; except in cases of inundation. The instant the river has overflowed its banks, the velocity of its current is always turned that way, and the inundation is perceived to continue for some days; which it would not otherwise do, if, as soon as the cause was discontinued, it acquired its former rapidity.

A violent storm, that sets directly up against the course of the stream, will always retard, and sometimes entirely stop its course. I have seen an instance of this, when the bed of a large river was left entirely dry for some hours, and fish were caught among the stones at the bottom.

Inundations are generally greater towards the source of rivers, than farther down; because the current is generally swifter below than above; and that for the reasons already assigned.

A little river † may be received into a large one, without augmenting either its width or depth. This, which at first view seems a paradox, is yet very easily accounted for. The little river, in this case, only goes towards encreasing the swiftness of the larger, and putting its dormant waters into motion. In this man-

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 62. † Guglielmini, *ibid.*

ner, the Venetian branch of the Po was pushed on by the Ferarese branch and that of Panaro, without any enlargement of its breadth or depth from these accessions.

A river tending to enter another, either perpendicularly, or in an opposite direction, will be diverted, by degrees, from that direction; and be obliged to make itself a more favourable entrance downward, and more conspiring with the stream of the former.

The union of two rivers into one, makes it flow the swifter; since the same quantity of water, instead of rubbing against four shores, now only rubs against two. And, besides, the current being deeper, becomes of consequence more fitted for motion.

With respect to the places from whence rivers proceed, it may be taken for a general rule, that the largest * and highest mountains supply the greatest and most extensive rivers. It may also be remarked, in whatever direction the ridge of the mountain runs, the river takes an opposite course. If the mountain, for instance, stretches from north to south, the river runs from east to west; and so contrariwise. These are some of the most generally received opinions with regard to the course of rivers;

• Doctor Halley.

however, they are liable to many exceptions ; and nothing but an actual knowledge of each particular river can furnish us with an exact theory of its current.

The largest rivers of Europe are, first, the Wolga, which is about six hundred and fifty leagues in length, extending from Reschow to Astrachan. It is remarkable of this river, that it abounds with water during the summer months of May and June; but all the rest of the year is so shallow as scarce to cover its bottom, or allow a passage for loaded vessels that trade up its stream. It was up this river that the English attempted a trade into Persia, in which they were so unhappily disappointed, in the year 1741. The next in order is the Danube. The course of this is about four hundred and fifty leagues, from the mountains of Switzerland to the Black Sea. It is so deep between Buda and Belgrade, that the Turks and Christians have fleets of men of war upon it; which frequently engaged, during the last war between the Ottomans and the Austrians: however, it is unnavigable further down, by reason of its cataracts, which prevent its commerce into the Black Sea. The Don, or Tanais, which is four hundred leagues from the source of that branch of it called the Sosna, to its mouth in the Euxine

sea. In one part of its course, it approaches near the Wolga; and Peter the Great had actually begun a canal, by which he intended joining those two rivers; which he did not live to finish. The Nieper, or Boristhenes, which rises in the middle of Muscovy, and runs a course of three hundred and fifty leagues, to empty itself into the Black Sea. The Old Cossacks inhabit the banks and islands of this river; and frequently cross the Black Sea, to plunder the maritime places on the coasts of Turkey. The Dwina; which takes its rise in a province of the same name in Russia, then runs a course of three hundred leagues, and disembogues into the White Sea, a little below Archangel.

The largest rivers of Asia are, the Hoanho, in China, which is eight hundred and fifty leagues in length, computing from its source at Raja Ribron, to its mouth in the Gulph of Changi. The Jenisca of Tartary, about eight hundred leagues in length, from the Lake Selinga, to the Icy Sea. This river is, by some, supposed to supply most of that great quantity of drift wood which is seen floating in the seas, near the Artic circle. The Oby, of five hundred leagues, running from the lake of Kila into the Northern sea. The Amour, in Eastern Tartary, whose course is about five hundred and seventy-five leagues, from its source to its

entrance into the sea of Kamtskatka. The Kiam, in China, five hundred and fifty leagues in length. The Ganges, one of the most noted rivers in the world, and about as long as the former. It rises in the mountains which separate India from Tartary; and running through the dominions of the Great Mogul, discharges itself by several mouths into the bay of Bengal. It is not only esteemed by the Indians for the depth, and pureness of its stream, but for a supposed sanctity which they believe to be in its waters. It is visited annually by several hundred thousand pilgrims, who pay their devotions to the river as to a god; for savage simplicity is always known to mistake the blessings of the Deity, for the Deity himself. They carry their dying friends from distant countries, to expire on its banks; and to be buried in its stream. The water is lowest in April or May; but the rains beginning to fall soon after, the flat country is overflowed for several miles, till about the end of September; the waters then begin to retire, leaving a prolific sediment behind, that enriches the soil, and, in a few days time, gives a luxuriance to vegetation, beyond what can be conceived by an European. Next to this may be reckoned the still more celebrated river Euphrates. This rises from two sources, north-

ward of the city Erzerum, in Turcomania; and unites about three days journey below the same; from whence, after performing a course of five hundred leagues, it falls into the Gulph of Persia, fifty miles below the city of Bassora in Arabia. The river Indus is extended from its source to its discharge into the Arabian sea, four hundred leagues.

The largest rivers of Africa are, the Senegal, which runs a course of not less than eleven hundred leagues, comprehending the Niger, which some have supposed to fall into it. However, later accounts seem to affirm that the Niger is lost in the sands, about three hundred miles up from the western coasts of Africa. Be this as it may, the Senegal is well known to be navigable for more than three hundred leagues up the country; and how much higher it may reach is not yet discovered, as the dreadful fatality of the inland parts of Africa, not only deter curiosity, but even avarice, which is a much stronger passion. At the end of last war, of fifty English men that were sent to the factory at Galam, a place taken from the French, and nine hundred miles up the river, only one returned to tell the fate of his companions, who were killed by the climate. The celebrated river Nile is said to be nine hundred and seventy

leagues, from its source among the mountains of the Moon, in Upper Æthiopia, to its opening into the Mediterranean sea. The sources of this river were considered as inscrutable by the ancients; and the causes of its periodical inundation were equally unknown. They have both been ascertained by the missionaries who have travelled into the interior parts of Æthiopia. The Nile takes its rise in the kingdom of Gojam*, from a small aperture on the top of a mountain, which, though not above a foot and an half over, yet was unfathomable. This fountain, when arrived at the foot of the mountain, expands into a river; and, being joined by others, forms a lake thirty leagues long, and as many broad; from this, its channel, in some measure, winds back to the country where it first began; from thence, precipitating by frightful cataracts, it travels through a variety of desert regions, equally formidable, such as Amhara, Olaca, Damot, and Xaoa. Upon its arrival in the kingdom of Upper Egypt, it runs through a rocky channel, which some late travellers have mistaken for its cataracts. In the beginning of its course, it receives many lesser rivers into it; and Pliny was mistaken, in saying that it received none. In the beginning also of its course, it

* Kircher, Mund. Subt. vol. ii. p. 72.

has many windings; but, for above three hundred leagues from the sea, it runs in a direct line. Its annual overflowings arise from a very obvious cause, which is almost universal with all the great rivers that take their source near the Line. The rainy season, which is periodical in those climates, flood the rivers; and as this always happens in our summer, so the Nile is at that time overflown. From these inundations, the inhabitants of Egypt derive happiness and plenty; and, when the river does not arise to its accustomed heights, they prepare for an indifferent harvest. It begins to overflow about the seventeenth of June; it generally continues to augment for forty days, and decreases in about as many more. This time of encrease and decrease, however, is much more inconsiderable now than it was among the ancients. Herodotus informs us, that it was an hundred days rising, and as many falling; which shews that the inundation was much greater at that time than at present. Mr. Buffon * has ascribed the present diminution, as well to the lessening of the mountains of the Moon, by their substance having so long been washed down with the stream, as to the rising of the earth in Egypt, that has for so many ages received this extraneous supply.

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 82.

But we do not find, by the buildings that have remained since the times of the ancients, that the earth is much raised since then. Besides the Nile in Africa, we may reckon the Zara, and the Coanza, from the greatness of whose openings into the sea, and the rapidity of whose streams, we form an estimate of the great distance from whence they come. Their courses, however, are spent in watering deserts and savage countries, whose poverty or fierceness have kept strangers away.

But of all parts of the world, America, as it exhibits the most lofty mountains, so also it supplies the largest rivers. The foremost of these is the great river Amazons, which, from its source in the lake of Lauricocha, to its discharge into the Western Ocean, performs a course of more than twelve hundred leagues *. The breadth and depth of this river is answerable to its vast length; and, where its width is most contracted, its depth is augmented in proportion. So great is the body of its waters, that other rivers, though before the objects of admiration, themselves are lost in its bosom. It proceeds, after their junction, with its usual appearance, without any visible change in its breadth or rapidity; and, if we may so express

* Ulloa, vol. i. p. 388.

it, remains great without ostentation. In some places it displays its whole magnificence, dividing into several large branches, and encompassing a multitude of islands; and, at length, discharging itself into the ocean, by a channel of an hundred and fifty miles broad. Another river, that may almost rival the former, is the St. Lawrence, in Canada, which rising in the lake Assiniboils, passes from one lake to another, from Cristinaux to Alempigo, from thence to lake Superior; thence to the lake Hurons; to lake Erie; to lake Ontario; and, at last, after a course of nine hundred leagues, pours their collected waters into the Atlantic ocean. The river Mississippi is of more than seven hundred leagues in length, beginning at its source near the lake Assiniboils, and ending at its opening into the Gulph of Mexico. The river Plate runs a length of more than eight hundred leagues from its source in the river Parana, to its mouth. The river Oroonoko is seven hundred and fifty-five leagues in length, from its source near Pasto, to its discharge into the Atlantic ocean.

Such is the amazing length of our greatest rivers; and even in some of these, the most remote sources very probably yet continue unknown. In fact, if we consider the number of

rivers which they receive, and the little acquaintance we have with the regions through which they run, it is not to be wondered at that geographers are divided concerning the sources of most of them. As among a number of roots by which nourishment is conveyed to a stately tree, it is difficult to determine precisely that by which the tree is chiefly supplied; so among the many branches of a great river, it is equally difficult to tell which is the original. Hence it may easily happen, that a smaller branch is taken for the capital stream; and its runnings are pursued, and delineated, in prejudice of some other branch that better deserved the name and the description. In this manner * in Europe, the Danube is known to receive thirty lesser rivers: the Wolga, thirty-two or thirty-three. In Asia, the Hohanno receives thirty-five; the Jenisca above sixty; the Oby as many; the Amour about forty; the Nanquin receives thirty rivers; the Ganges twenty; and the Euphrates about eleven. In Africa, the Senegal receives more than twenty rivers; the Nile receives not one for five hundred leagues upwards, and then only twelve or thirteen. In America, the river Amazons receives above sixty, and those very considerable; the river

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 74.

St. Lawrence about forty, counting those which fall into its lakes; the Mississippi receives forty; and the river Plate above fifty.

I mentioned the inundations of the Ganges and the Nile, but almost every other great river whose source lies within the tropics, have their stated inundations also. The river Pegu has been called, by travellers, the Indian Nile, because of the similar overflowings of its stream: this it does to an extent of thirty leagues on each side; and so fertilizes the soil, that the inhabitants send great quantities of rice into other countries, and have still abundance for their own consumption. The river Senegal has likewise its inundations, which cover the whole flat country of Negroland, beginning and ending much about the same time with those of the Nile; as, in fact, both rivers rise from the same mountains. But the difference between the effects of the inundations in each river, is remarkable: in the one, it distributes health and plenty; but in the other, diseases, famine, and death. The inhabitants along the torrid coasts of the Senegal, can receive no benefit from any additional manure the river may carry down to their soil, which is, by nature, more than sufficiently luxuriant; or, even if they could, they have not industry to turn it to any advantage.

The banks, therefore, of the rivers, lie uncultivated, overgrown with rank and noxious herbage, and infested with thousands of animals of various malignity. Every new flood only tends to encrease the rankness of the soil, and to provide fresh shelter for the creatures that infest it. If the flood continues but a few days longer than usual, the improvident inhabitants, who are driven up into the higher grounds, begin to want provisions, and a famine ensues. When the river begins to return into its channel, the humidity and heat of the air are equally fatal; and the carcases of infinite numbers of animals, swept away by the inundation, putrefying in the sun, produce a stench that is almost insupportable. But even the luxuriance of the vegetation itself, becomes a nuisance. I have been assured, by persons of veracity that have been up the river Senegal, that there are some plants that grow along the coast, the smell of which is so powerful, that it is hardly to be endured. It is certain, that all the sailors and soldiers who have been at any of our factories there, ascribe the unwholsomeness of the voyage up the stream, to the vegetable vapour. However this be, the inundations of the rivers in this wretched part of the globe, contribute scarce any advantage, if we except to the beauty of

the prospects which they afford. These, indeed, are finished up beyond the utmost reach of art: a spacious glassy river, with its banks here and there fringed to the very surface by the mangrove-tree, that grows down into the water, presents itself to view. Lofty forests of various colours, with openings between, carpeted with green plants, and the most gaudy flowers; beasts and animals, of various kinds, that stand upon the banks of the river, and, with a sort of wild curiosity, survey the mariners as they pass, contribute to heighten the scene. This is the sketch of an African prospect; which delights the eye, even while it destroys the constitution.

Beside these annually periodical inundations, there are many rivers that overflow at much shorter intervals. Thus most of those in Peru and Chili have scarce any motion by night; but upon the appearance of the morning sun, they resume their former rapidity: this proceeds from the mountain snows, which melting with the heat, encrease the stream, and continue to drive on the current while the sun continues to dissolve them. Some rivers also flow with an even steady current, from their source to the sea; others flow with greater rapidity, their stream being poured down in a cataract, or swallowed by the sands, before they reach the sea.

The rivers of those countries that have been least inhabited, are usually more rocky, uneven, and broken into water-falls or cataracts, than those where the industry of man has been more prevalent. Wherever man comes, nature puts on a milder appearance: the terrible and the sublime, are exchanged for the gentle and the useful; the cataract is sloped away into a placid stream; and the banks become more smooth and even *. It must have required ages to render the Rhone or the Loire navigable; their beds must have been cleaned and directed; their inequalities removed; and, by a long course of industry, nature must have been taught to conspire with the desires of her controller. Every one's experience must have supplied instances of rivers thus being made to flow more evenly, and more beneficially to mankind; but there are some whose currents are so rapid, and falls so precipitate, that no art can obviate; and that must for ever remain as amazing instances of incorrigible nature.

Of this kind are the cataracts of the Rhine; one of which I have seen exhibit a very strange appearance; it was that at Schathausen, which was frozen quite across, and the water stood in columns where the cataract had formerly fallen. The Nile, as was said, has its cataracts. The

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 90.

river Vologda, in Russia, has two. The river Zara, in Africa, has one near its source. The river Velino, in Italy, has a cataract of above an hundred and fifty feet perpendicular. Near the city Gottenburgh *, in Sweden, the river there rushes down from a prodigious high precipice, into a deep pit, with a terrible noise, and such dreadful force, that those trees designed for the masts of ships, which are floated down the river, usually are turned upside down in their fall, and often are shattered to pieces, by being dashed against the surface of the water in the pit; this occurs if the masts fall sideways upon the water; but if they fall endways, they dive so far under water, that they disappear for a quarter of an hour, or more: the pit into which they are thus plunged, has been often sounded with a line of some hundred fathoms long, but no ground has been found hitherto. There is also a cataract at Powerscourt, in Ireland, in which, if I am rightly informed, the water falls three hundred feet perpendicular; which is a greater descent than that of any other cataract in any part of the world. There is a cataract at Albany, in the province of New York, which pours its stream fifty feet perpendicular. But of all the cataracts in the

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 325.

world, that of Niagara, in Canada, if we consider the great body of water that falls, must be allowed to be the greatest, and the most astonishing.

This amazing fall of water is made by the river St. Lawrence, in its passage from the lake Erie into the lake Ontario. We have already said that St. Lawrence was one of the largest rivers in the world; and yet the whole of its waters are here poured down, by a fall of an hundred and fifty feet perpendicular. It is not easy to bring the imagination to correspond with the greatness of the scene; a river, extremely deep and rapid, and that serves to drain the waters of almost all North America into the Atlantic ocean, is here poured precipitately down a ledge of rocks, that rise, like a wall, across the whole bed of its stream. The width of the river, a little above, is near three quarters of a mile broad; and the rocks, where it grows narrower, are four hundred yards over. Their direction is not straight across, but hollowing inwards like an horse-shoe; so that the cataract, which bends to the shape of the obstacle, rounding inwards, presents a kind of theatre the most tremendous in nature. Just in the middle of this circular wall of waters, a little island, that has braved the fury of the current, presents one

of its points, and divides the stream at top into two; but it unites again long before it has got to the bottom. The noise of the fall is heard at several leagues distance; and the fury of the waters at the bottom of their fall, is inconceivable. The dashing produces a mist that rises to the very clouds; and that produces a most beautiful rainbow, when the sun shines. It may easily be conceived, that such a cataract quite destroys the navigation of the stream; and yet some Indian canoes, as it is said, have been known to venture down it with safety.

Of those rivers that lose themselves in the sands, or are swallowed up by chasms in the earth, we have various information. What we are told by the ancients, of the river Alpheus, in Arcadia, that sinks into the ground, and rises again near Syracuse, in Sicily, where it takes the name of Arethusa, is rather more known than credited. But we have better information with respect to the river Tigris being lost in this manner under Mount Taurus; of the Guadalquiver, in Spain, being buried in the sands; of the river Greatah, in Yorkshire, running underground, and rising again; and even of the great Rhine itself, a part of which is no doubt lost in the sands, a little above Leyden. But it ought to be observed of this

river, that by much the greatest part arrives at the ocean. For, although the ancient channel which fell into the sea, a little to the west of that city, be now entirely choaked up, yet there are still a number of small canals, that carry a great body of waters to the sea: and, besides, it has also two very large openings, the Lech, and the Wal, below Rotterdam, by which it empties itself abundantly.

Be this as it will, nothing is more common in sultry and sandy deserts, than rivers being thus either lost in the sands, or entirely dried up by the sun. And hence we see, that under the Line, the small rivers are but few; for such little streams as are common in Europe, and which with us receive the name of rivers, would quickly evaporate, in those parching and extensive deserts. It is even confidently asserted, that the great river Niger itself is thus lost before it reaches the ocean; and that its supposed mouths, the Gambia, and the Senegal, are distinct rivers, that come a vast way from the interior parts of the country. It appears, therefore, that the rivers under the Line are large; but it is otherwise at the Poles *, where they must necessarily be small. In that desolate

* Krantz's History of Greenland, vol. i. p. 41.

region, as the mountains are covered with perpetual ice, which melts but little, or not at all, the springs and rivulets are furnished with a very small supply. Here, therefore, men and beasts would perish, and die for thirst, if Providence had not ordered, that in the hardest winter, thaws should intervene, which deposit a small quantity of snow-water in pools under the ice; and from this source the wretched inhabitants drain a scanty beverage.

Thus, whatever quarter of the globe we turn to, we shall find new reasons to be satisfied with that part of it in which we ourselves reside. Our rivers furnish all the plenty of the African stream, without its inundation; they have all the coolness of the Polar rivulet, with a more constant supply; they may want the terrible magnificence of huge cataracts, or extensive lakes, but they are more navigable, and more transparent; though less deep and rapid than the rivers of the torrid zone, they are more manageable, and only wait the will of man to take their direction. The rivers of the torrid zone, like the monarchs of the country, rule with despotic tyranny, profuse in their bounties, and ungovernable in their rage. The rivers of Europe, like their kings, are the friends, and not the oppressors of the people; bounded by known limits, abridged in the

power of doing ill, directed by human sagacity, and only at freedom to distribute happiness and plenty.

C H A P. XV.

Of the Ocean in general; and of its Saltness.

I F we look upon a map of the world, we shall find that the ocean occupies considerably more of the globe, than the land is found to do. This immense body of waters is diffused round both the Old and New Continent, to the south; and may surround them also to the north, for what we know, but the ice in those regions has stopped our enquiries. Although the ocean, properly speaking, is but one extensive sheet of waters, continued over every part of the globe, without interruption, and although no part of it is divided from the rest, yet geographers have distinguished it by different names; as the Atlantic or Western Ocean, the Northern Ocean, the Southern Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the Indian Ocean. Others have divided it differently, and given other names; as the Frozen Ocean, the Inferior Ocean, or the American Ocean. But all these being arbitrary distinctions, and not of Nature's making, the naturalist may consider them with indifference.

In this vast receptacle, almost all the rivers of the earth ultimately terminate; nor do such great supplies seem to encrease its stores; for it is neither apparently swollen by their tribute, nor diminished by their failure; it still continues the same. Indeed, what is the quantity of water of all the rivers and lakes in the world, compared to that contained in this great receptacle *? If we should offer to make a rude estimate, we shall find that all the rivers in the world, flowing into the bed of the sea, with a continuance of their present stores, would take up at least eight hundred years to fill it to its present height. For, supposing the sea to be eighty-five millions of square miles in extent, and a quarter of a mile, upon an average, in depth, this, upon calculation, will give above twenty-one millions of cubic miles of water, as the contents of the whole ocean. Now, to estimate the quantity of water which all the rivers supply, take any one of them; the Po, for instance, the quantity of whose discharge into the sea, is known to be one cubic mile of water in twenty-six days. Now it will be found, upon a rude computation, from the quantity of ground the Po, with its influent streams, covers, that all the rivers of the world furnish about

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 70.

two thousand times that quantity of water. In the space of a year, therefore, they will have discharged into the sea about twenty-six thousand cubic miles of water; and not till eight hundred years, will they have discharged as much water as is contained in the sea at present. I have not troubled the reader with the odd numbers, lest he should imagine I was giving precision to a subject that is incapable of it.

Thus great is the assemblage of waters diffused round our habitable globe; and yet, immeasurable as they seem, they are mostly rendered subservient to the necessities and the conveniencies of so little a being as man. Nevertheless, if it should be asked whether they be made for him alone, the question is not easily resolved. Some philosophers have perceived so much analogy to man in the formation of the ocean, that they have not hesitated to assert its being made for him alone. The distribution of land and water *, say they, is admirable; the one being laid against the other so skilfully, that there is a just equipoise of the whole globe. Thus the Northern ocean balances against the Southern; and the New Continent is an exact counter-weight to the Old. As to any objection from the ocean's occupying too large a share of

* Derham Physico Theol,

the globe, they contend, that there could not have been a smaller surface employed to supply the earth with a due share of evaporation. On the other hand, some take the gloomy side of the question; they either magnify † its apparent defects; or assert, that * what seems defects to us, may be real beauties to some wiser order of beings. They observe, that multitudes of animals are concealed in the ocean, and but a small part of them are known; the rest, therefore, they fail not to say, were certainly made for their own benefit, and not for ours. How far either of these opinions be just, I will not presume to determine; but of this we are certain, that God has endowed us with abilities to turn this great extent of waters to our own advantage. He has made these things, perhaps, for other uses; but he has given us faculties to convert them to our own. This much agitated question, therefore, seems to terminate here. We shall never know whether the things of this world have been made for our use; but we very well know, that we have been made to enjoy them. Let us then boldly affirm, that the earth, and all its wonders, are ours; since we are furnished with powers to force them into

† Burnet's Theory. Passim. * Pope's Ethic Epistles,
Passim.

our service. Man is the lord of all the sublunary creation; the howling savage, the winding serpent, with all the untamable and rebellious offspring of Nature, are destroyed in the contest, or driven at a distance from his habitations. The extensive and tempestuous ocean, instead of limiting or dividing his power, only serves to assist his industry, and enlarge the sphere of his enjoyments. Its billows, and its monsters, instead of presenting a scene of terror, only call up the courage of this little intrepid being; and the greatest dangers that man now fears on the deep, is from his fellow creatures. Indeed, when I consider the human race as Nature has formed them, there is but very little of the habitable globe that seems made for them. But when I consider them as accumulating the experience of ages, in commanding the earth, there is nothing so great, or so terrible. What a poor contemptible being is the naked savage, standing on the beach of the ocean, and trembling at its tumults! How little capable is he of converting its terrors into benefits; or of saying, behold an element made wholly for my enjoyment! He considers it as an angry deity, and pays it the homage of submission. But it is very different when he has exercised his mental

powers; when he has learned to find his own superiority, and to make it subservient to his commands. It is then that his dignity begins to appear, and that the true Deity is justly praised for having been mindful of man; for having given him the earth for his habitation, and the sea for an inheritance.

This power which man has obtained over the ocean, was at first enjoyed in common; and none pretended to a right in that element where all seemed intruders. The sea, therefore, was open to all till the time of the emperor Justinian. His successor Leo granted such as were in possession of the shore, the sole right of fishing before their respective territories. The Thracian Bosphorus was the first that was thus appropriated; and from that time it has been the struggle of most of the powers of Europe to obtain an exclusive right in this element. The Republic of Venice claims the Adriatic. The Danes are in possession of the Baltic. But the English have a more extensive claim to the empire of all the seas, encompassing the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland; and altho' these have been long contested, yet they are now considered as their indisputable property. Every one knows that the great power

of the nation is exerted on this element; and that the instant England ceases to be superior upon the ocean, its safety begins to be precarious.

It is in some measure owing to our dependence upon the sea, and to our commerce there, that we are so well acquainted with its extent and figure. The bays, gulphs, currents, and shallows of the ocean, are much better known and examined than the provinces and kingdoms of the earth itself. The hopes of acquiring wealth by commerce, has carried man to much greater lengths than the desire of gaining information could have done. In consequence of this, there is scarce a strait or an harbour, scarce a rock or a quicksand, scarce an inflexion of the shore, or the jutting of a promontory, that has not been minutely described. But as these present very little entertainment to the imagination, or delight to any but those whose pursuits are lucrative, they need not be dwelt upon here. While the merchant and the mariner are solicitous in describing currents and soundings, the naturalist is employed in observing wonders, though not so beneficial, yet to him of a much more important nature. The saltiness of the sea seems to be the foremost.

Whence the sea has derived that peculiar bitterish saltiness which we find in it, appears, by

Aristotle, to have exercised the curiosity of naturalists in all ages. He supposed (and mankind were for ages content with the solution) that the sun continually raised dry saline exhalations from the earth, and deposited them upon the sea; and hence, say his followers, the waters of the sea are more salt at top than at bottom. But, unfortunately for this opinion, neither of the facts is true. Sea salt is not to be raised by the vapours of the sun; and sea water is not saltier at the top than at the bottom. Father Bohours is of opinion that the Creator gave the waters of the ocean their saltness at the beginning; not only to prevent their corruption, but to enable them to bear greater burthens. But their saltness does not prevent their corruption; for stagnant sea-water, like fresh, soon grows putrid: and, as for their bearing greater burthens, fresh water answers all the purposes of navigation quite as well. The established opinion, therefore, is that of Boyle *, who supposes, “that the sea’s saltness is supplied not only from rocks or masses of salt at the bottom of the sea, but also from the salt which the rains and rivers, and other waters, dissolve in their passage thro’ many parts of the earth, and at length carry with them to the sea.” But as there is a differ-

* Boyle, vol. iii. p. 221.

ence in the taste of rock-salt found at land, and that dissolved in the waters of the ocean, this may be produced by the plenty of nitrous and bituminous bodies that, with the salts, are likewise washed into that great receptacle. These substances being thus once carried to the sea, must for ever remain there; for they do not rise by evaporation, so as to be returned back from whence they came. Nothing but the fresh waters of the sea rise in vapours; and all the saltiness remains behind. From hence it follows, that every year the sea must become more and more salt; and this speculation Doctor Halley carries so far as to lay down a method of finding out the age of the world by the saltiness of its waters. "For if it be observed *," says he, "what quantity of salt is at present contained in a certain weight of water, taken up from the Caspian Sea, for example, and, after some centuries, what greater quantity of salt is contained in the same weight of water, taken from the same place; we may conclude, that in proportion as the saltiness has encreased in a certain time, so much must it have encreased before that time; and we may thus, by the rule of proportion, make an estimate of the whole time wherein the water would acquire the degree

* Phil. Trans. vol. v. p. 218.

of saltness it should be then possessed of." All this may be fine; however, an experiment, begun in this century, which is not to be completed till some centuries hence, is rather a little mortifying to modern curiosity: and, I am induced to think, the inhabitants round the Caspian sea, will not be apt to undertake the enquiry.

This saltness is found to prevail in every part of the ocean; and as much at the surface, as at the bottom. It is also found in all those seas that communicate with the ocean; but rather in a less degree.

The great lakes, likewise, that have no outlets nor communication with the ocean, are found to be salt; but some of them in less proportion. On the contrary, all those lakes through which rivers run into the sea, however extensive they be, are, notwithstanding, very fresh: for the rivers do not deposit their salts in the bed of the lake, but carry them, with their currents, into the ocean. Thus the lakes Ontario and Erie, in North America, although for magnitude they may be considered as inland seas, are, nevertheless, fresh water lakes; and kept so by the river St. Lawrence, which passes through them. But those lakes that have no communication with the sea, nor any rivers going out, although they be less than the

former, are, however, always salt. Thus, that which goes by the name of the Dead Sea, tho' very small, when compared to those already mentioned, is so exceedingly salt, that its waters seem scarce capable of dissolving any more. The lakes of Mexico, and of Titicaca, in Peru, though of no great extent, are, nevertheless salt; and both for the same reason.

Those who are willing to turn all things to the best, have not failed to consider this saltiness of the sea, as a peculiar blessing from Providence, in order to keep so great an element sweet and wholesome. What foundation there may be in the remark, I will not pretend to determine; but we shall shortly find a much better cause for its being kept sweet, namely by its motion.

On the other hand, there have been many who have considered the subject in a different light, and have tried every endeavour to make salt-water fresh, so as to supply the wants of mariners in long voyages, or when exhausted of their ordinary stores. At first it was supposed simple distillation would do; but it was soon found that the bitter part of the water still kept mixed. It was then tried by uniting salt of Tartar with sea-water, and distilling both: but here the expence was greater than the advantage. Calcined bones were next thought

of; but an hoghead of calcined bones, carried to sea, would take up as much room as an hoghead of water, and was more hard to be obtained. In this state, therefore, have the attempts to sweeten sea-water rested; the chymist satisfied with the reality of his invention; and the mariner convinced of its being useless. I cannot, therefore, avoid mentioning a kind of succedaneum which has been lately conceived to answer the purposes of fresh-water, when mariners are quite exhausted. It is well known, that persons who go into a warm bath, come out several ounces heavier than they went in; their bodies having imbibed a correspondent quantity of water. This more particularly happens, if they have been previously debarred from drinking, or go in with a violent thirst; which they quickly find quenched, and their spirits restored. It was supposed, that in case of a total failure of fresh-water at sea, a warm bath might be made of sea-water, for the use of mariners; and that their pores would thus imbibe the fluid, without any of its salts, which would be seen to crystallize on the surface of their bodies. In this manner, it is supposed, a sufficient quantity of moisture may be procured to sustain life, till time or accident furnish a more copious supply.

But, however this be, the saltness of the sea

can by no means be considered as a principal cause in preserving its waters from putrefaction. The ocean has its currents, like rivers, which circulate its contents round the globe; and these may be said to be the great agents that keep it sweet and wholesome. Its saltness alone would by no means answer this purpose: and some have even imagined, that the various substances with which it is mixed, rather tend to promote putrescence than impede it. Sir Robert Hawkins, one of our most enlightened navigators, gives the following account of a calm, in which the sea continuing for some time without motion, began to assume a very formidable appearance. "Were it not," says he, "for the moving of the sea, by the force of winds, tides, and currents, it would corrupt all the world. The experiment of this I saw in the year 1590, lying with a fleet about the islands of Azores, almost six months; the greatest part of which time we were becalmed. Upon which all the sea became so replenished with several sorts of gellies, and forms of serpents, adders, and snakes, as seemed wonderful: some green, some black, some yellow, some white, some of divers colours, and many of them had life; and some there were an yard and an half, and two yards long; which had I not seen, I could hardly have

believed. And hereof are witnesses all the company of the ships which were then present: so that hardly a man could draw a bucket of water clear of some corruption. In which voyage, towards the end thereof, many of every ship fell sick, and began to die apace. But the speedy passage into our country, was a remedy to the craz'd, and a preservative for those that were not touched."

This shews, abundantly, how little the sea's saltness was capable of preserving it from putrefaction: but to put the matter beyond all doubt, Mr. Boyle kept a quantity of sea-water, taken up in the English channel, for some time barrelled up; and, in the space of a few weeks, it began to acquire a foetid smell *: He was also assured, by one of his acquaintance who was becalmed for twelve or fourteen days in the Indian sea, that the water, for want of motion, began to stink; and that had it continued much longer, the stench would probably have poisoned him. It is the motion, therefore, and not the saltness of the sea, that preserves it in its present state of salubrity; and this, very probably, by dashing and breaking in pieces the rudiments, if I may so call them, of the various animals that would otherwise breed there, and putrefy.

* Boyle, vol. iii. p. 222.

There are some advantages, however, which are derived from the saltness of the sea. Its waters being evaporated, furnish that salt which is used for domestic purposes; and, although in some places it is made from springs, and, in others, dug out of mines, yet the greatest quantity is made only from the sea. That which is called bay-salt, (from its coming to us by the Bay of Biscay) is a stronger kind, made by evaporation in the sun: that called common salt, is evaporated in pans over the fire, and is of a much inferior quality to the former.

Another benefit arising from the quantity of salt dissolved in the sea, is, that it thus becomes heavier, and, consequently, more buoyant. Mr. Boyle, who examined the difference between sea-water and fresh, found that the former appeared to be about a forty-fifth part heavier than the latter. Those, also, who have had opportunities of bathing in the sea, pretend to have experienced a much greater ease in swimming there, than in fresh water. However, as we see they have only a forty-fifth part more of their weight sustained by it, I am apt to doubt whether so minute a difference can be practically perceivable. Be this as it may, as sea-water alters in its weight from fresh, so it is found also to differ from itself in different parts of the ocean.

In general, it is perceived to be heavier, and, consequently, saltier, the nearer we approach the Line *.

But there is an advantage arising from the saltiness of the waters of the sea, much greater than what has been yet mentioned; which is, that their congelation is thus retarded. Some, indeed, have gone so far as to say, that † sea-water never freezes: but this is an assertion contradicted by experience. However, it is certain that it requires a much greater degree of cold to freeze it, than fresh water; so that, while rivers and springs are seen converted into one solid body of ice, the sea is always fit for navigation, and no way affected by the coldness of the severest winter. It is, therefore, one of the greatest blessings we derive from this element, that when at land all the stores of Nature are locked up from us, we find the sea ever open to our necessities, and patient of the hand of industry.

But it must not be supposed, because in our temperate climate we never see the sea frozen, that it is in the same manner open in every part of it. A very little acquaintance with the accounts of mariners, must have informed us, that at the polar regions it is embarrassed with moun-

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 297.

† Macrobius.

tains, and moving sheets of ice, that often render it impassable. These tremendous floats are of different magnitudes; sometimes rising more than a thousand feet above the surface of the water*; sometimes diffused into plains of above two hundred leagues in length; and, in many parts, sixty or eighty broad. They are usually divided by fissures; one piece following another so close, that a person may step from one to the other. Sometimes mountains are seen rising amidst these plains, and presenting the appearance of a variegated landscape, with hills and valleys, houses, churches, and towers. These are appearances in which all naturalists are agreed; but the great contest is respecting their formation. Mr. Buffon asserts †, that they are formed from fresh water alone; which congealing at the mouths of great rivers, accumulate those huge masses that disturb navigation. However, this great naturalist seems not to have been aware that there are two sorts of ice floating in these seas; the flat ice, and the mountain ice: the one formed of sea-water only; the other, of fresh ‡.

The flat, or driving ice, is entirely composed

* Krantz's History of Greenland, vol. i. p. 31. † Buffon, vol. ii. p. 91. ‡ Krantz.

of sea-water ; which, upon diffolution, is found to be salt ; and is readily distinguished from the mountain or fresh-water ice, by its whiteness, and want of transparency. This ice is much more terrible to mariners than that which rises up in lumps: a ship can avoid the one, as it is seen at a distance ; but it often gets in among the other, which sometimes closing, crushes it to pieces. This, which manifestly has a different origin from the fresh-water ice, may perhaps have been produced in the Icy Sea, beneath the Pole ; or along the coasts of Spitzberg, or Nova Zembla.

The mountain-ice, as was said, is different in every respect, being formed of fresh water, and appearing hard and transparent ; it is generally of a pale green colour, though some pieces are of a beautiful sky blue ; many large masses, also, appear grey ; and some black. If examined more nearly, they are found to be incorporated with earth, stones, and brush-wood washed from the shore. On these also, are sometimes found, not only earth, but nests with birds eggs, at several hundred miles from land. The generality of these, though almost totally fresh, have, nevertheless, a thick crust of salt-water frozen upon them, probably from the power that ice has sometimes to produce ice.

Such mountains as are here described, are most usually seen at spring-time, and after a violent storm, driving out to sea, where they at first terrify the mariner, and are soon after dashed to pieces by the continual washing of the waves; or driven into the warmer regions of the south, there to be melted away. They sometimes, however, strike back upon their native shores, where they seem to take root at the feet of mountains; and, as Martius tells us, are sometimes higher than the mountains themselves. Those seen by him were blue, full of clefts and cavities made by the rain, and crowned with snow, which alternately thawing and freezing every year, augmented their size. These, composed of materials more solid than that driving at sea, presented a variety of agreeable figures to the eye, that, with a little help from fancy, assumed the appearance of trees in blossom; the inside of churches, with arches, pillars, and windows; and the blue coloured rays, darting from within, presented the resemblance of a glory.

If we enquire into the origin and formation of these, which, as we see, are very different from the former, I think we have a very satisfactory account of them in Krantz's History

of Greenland; and I will take leave to give the passage, with a very few alterations. "These mountains of ice," says he, "are not salt, like the sea-water, but sweet; and, therefore, can be formed no where except on the mountains, in rivers, in caverns, and against the hills near the sea-shore. The mountains of Greenland are so high, that the snow which falls upon them, particularly on the north side, is, in one night's time, wholly converted into ice: they also contain clefts and cavities, where the sun seldom or never injects his rays: besides these, are projections, or landing-places, on the declivities of the steepest hills, where the rain and snow-water lodge, and quickly congeal. When now the accumulated flakes of snow slide down, or fall with the rain from the eminences above, on these prominences; or, when here and there a mountain-spring comes rolling down to such a lodging place, where the ice has already seated itself, they all freeze, and add their tribute to it. This, by degrees, waxes to a body of ice, that can no more be overpowered by the sun; and which, though it may indeed, at certain seasons, diminish by a thaw, yet, upon the whole, through annual acquisitions, it assumes an annual growth. Such a body of ice is often prominent far over

the rocks. It does not melt on the upper surface, but underneath; and also cracks into many larger or smaller clefts, from whence the thawed water trickles out. By this it becomes, at last, so weak, that being overloaded with its own ponderous bulk, it breaks loose, and tumbles down the rocks with a terrible crash. Where it happens to overhang a precipice on the shore, it plunges into the deep with a shock like thunder; and with such an agitation of the water, as will upset a boat at some distance, as many a poor Greenlander has fatally experienced.* Thus are these amazing ice-mountains launched forth to sea, and found floating in the waters round both the Poles. It is these that have hindered mariners from discovering the extensive countries that lie round the South Pole; and that probably block up the passage to China by the North.

I will conclude this chapter with one effect more, produced by the saltness of the sea; which is, the luminous appearance of its waves in the night. All who have been spectators of a sea by night, a little ruffled with winds, seldom fail of observing its fiery brightness. In * some places it shines as far as the eye can reach;

* Boyle, vol. i. p. 294.

at other times, only when the waves boom against the side of the vessel, or the oar dashes into the water. Some seas shine often; others more seldom; some, ever when particular winds blow; and others, within a narrow compass; a long tract of light being seen along the surface, whilst all the rest is hid in total darkness. It is not easy to account for these extraordinary appearances: some have supposed that a number of luminous insects produced the effect, and this is in reality sometimes the case; in general, however, they have every resemblance to that light produced by electricity; and, probably, arise from the agitation and dashing of the saline particles of the fluid against each other. But the manner in which this is done, for we can produce nothing similar, by any experiments hitherto made, remains for some happier accident to discover. Our progress in the knowledge of nature is slow; and it is a mortifying consideration, that we are hitherto more indebted for success to chance than industry.

C H A P. XVII.

Of the Tides, Motion, and Currents of the Sea;
with their Effects.

IT was said in the former chapter, that the waters of the sea were kept sweet by their motion; without which they would soon putrefy, and spread universal infection. If we look for final causes, here, indeed, we have a great and an obvious one that presents itself before us. Had the sea been made without motion, and resembling a pool of stagnant water, the nobler races of animated nature would shortly be at an end. Nothing would then be left alive but swarms of ill formed creatures, with scarce more than vegetable life; and subsisting by putrefaction. Were this extensive bed of waters entirely quiescent, millions of the smaller reptile kinds would there find a proper retreat to breed and multiply in; they would find there no agitations, no concussion in the parts of the fluid to crush their feeble frames, or to force them from the places where they were bred: there they would multiply in security and ease, enjoy a short life, and, putrefying, thus again give nourishment to numberless others, as little

worthy of existence as themselves. But the motion of this great element, effectually destroys the number of these viler creatures; its currents, and its tides, produce continual agitations, the shock of which they are not able to endure; the parts of the fluid rub against each other, destroy all viscidities; and the ocean, if I may so express it, acquires health by exercise.

The most obvious motion of the sea, and the most generally acknowledged, is that of its tides. This element is observed to flow for certain hours, from south towards north; in which motion or flux, which lasts about six hours, the sea gradually swells; so that entering the mouths of rivers, it drives back the river waters to their heads. After a continual flux of six hours, the sea seems to rest for a quarter of an hour; and then begins to ebb, or retire back again, from north to south, for six hours more; in which time the waters sinking, the rivers resume their natural course. After a seeming pause of a quarter of an hour, the sea again begins to flow as before: and thus it has alternately risen and fallen, twice a day, since the creation.

This amazing appearance did not fail to excite the curiosity, as it did the wonder of the ancients. After some wild conjectures of the

earliest philosophers, it became well known, in the times of Pliny, that the tides were entirely under the influence, in a small degree, of the sun; but in a much greater of the moon. It was found that there was a flux and reflux of the sea, in the space of twelve hours fifty minutes, which is exactly the time of a lunar day. It was observed, that whenever the moon was in the meridian, or, in other words, as nearly as possible over any part of the sea, that the sea flowed to that part, and made a tide there; on the contrary, it was found, that when the moon left the meridian, the sea began to flow back again from whence it came; and there might be said to ebb. Thus far the waters of the sea seemed very regularly to attend the motions of the moon. But as it appeared, likewise, that when the moon was in the opposite meridian, as far off as possible on the other side of the globe, that there was a tide on this side also; so that the moon produced two tides, one by her greatest approach to us, and another by her greatest distance from us: in other words, the moon, in once going round the earth, produced two tides, always at the same time; one on the part of the globe directly under her; and the other, on the part of the globe directly opposite.

Mankind continued for several ages content with knowing the general cause of these wonders, hopeless of discovering the particular manner of the moon's operation. Kepler was the first who conjectured that attraction was the principal cause; asserting, that the sphere of the moon's operation extended to the earth, and drew up its waters. The precise manner in which this is done, was discovered by Newton.

The moon has been found, like all the rest of the planets, to attract, and to be attracted by the earth. This attraction prevails throughout our whole planetary system. The more matter there is contained in any body, the more it attracts: and its influence decreases in proportion as the distance, when squared, encreases. This being premised, let us see what must ensue upon supposing the moon in the meridian of any tract of the sea. The surface of the water immediately under the moon, is nearer the moon than any other part of the globe is; and, therefore, must be more subject to its attraction than the waters any where else. The waters will, therefore, be attracted by the moon, and rise in an heap; whose eminence will be the highest where the attraction is greatest. In order to form this eminence, it is obvious that

the surface, as well as the depths, will be agitated; and that wherever the water runs from one part, succeeding waters must run to fill up the space it has left. Thus the waters of the sea, running from all parts, to attend the motions of the moon, produce the flowing of the tide; and it is high tide at that part wherever the moon comes over it, or into its meridian.

But when the moon travels onward, and ceases to point over the place where the waters were just risen, the cause here of their rising ceasing to operate, they will flow back by their natural gravity, into the lower parts from whence they had travelled; and this retiring of the waters will form the ebbing of the sea.

Thus the first part of the demonstration is obvious; since, in general, it requires no great sagacity to conceive that the waters nearest the moon are most attracted, or raised highest by the moon. But the other part of the demonstration, namely, how there come to be high tides at the same time, on the opposite side of the globe, and where the waters are farthest from the moon, is not so easy to conceive. To comprehend this, it must be observed, that the part of the earth, and its waters, that are farthest from the moon, are the parts of all others that

are least attracted by the moon: it must also be observed, that all the waters, when the moon is on the opposite side of the earth, must be attracted by it in the same direction that the earth itself attracts them; that is, if I may so say, quite through the body of the earth, towards the moon itself. This, therefore, being conceived, it is plain that those waters which are farthest from the moon, will have less weight than those of any other part, on the same side of the globe; because the moon's attraction, which conspires with the earth's attraction, is there least. Now, therefore, the waters farthest from the moon, having less weight, and being lightest, will be pressed on all sides, by those that, having more attraction, are heavier: they will be pressed, I say, on all sides; and the heavier waters flowing in, will make them swell and rise in an eminence directly opposite to that on the other side of the globe, caused by the more immediate influence of the moon.

In this manner the moon, in one diurnal revolution, produces two tides; one raised immediately under the sphere of its influence, and the other directly opposite to it. As the moon travels, this vast body of waters rears upward, as if to watch its motions; and pursues the same constant rotation. However, in this great work

of raising the tides, the sun has no small share; it produces its own tides constantly every day, just as the moon does, but in a much less degree, because the sun is at an immensely greater distance. Thus there are solar tides, and lunar tides. When the forces of these two great luminaries concur, which they always do when they are either in the same, or in opposite parts of the heavens, they jointly produce a much greater tide, than when they are so situated in the heavens, as each to make peculiar tides of their own. To express the very same thing technically; in the conjunctions and oppositions of the sun and moon, the attraction of the sun conspires with the attraction of the moon; by which means the high spring-tides are formed. But in the quadratures of the sun and moon, the water raised by the one is depressed by the other; and hence the lower neap tides have their production. In a word, the tides are greatest in the syzigies, and least in the quadratures.

This theory well understood, and the astronomical terms previously known, it may readily be brought to explain the various appearances of the tides, if the earth were covered with a deep sea, and the waters uninfluenced by shoals, currents, straits, or tempests. But in every part of the sea, near the shores, the geographer

must come in to correct the calculations of the astronomer. For, by reason of the shallowness of some places, and the narrowness of the straits in others, there arises a great diversity in the effect, not to be accounted for without an exact knowledge of all the circumstances of the place. In the great depths of the ocean, for instance, a very slow and imperceptible motion of the whole body of water will suffice to raise its surface several feet high; but if the same encrease of water is to be conveyed through a narrow channel, it must rush through it with the most impetuous rapidity. Thus in the English channel, and the German ocean, the tide is found to flow strongest in those places that are narrowest; the same quantity of water being, in this case, to be driven through a smaller passage. It is often seen, therefore, pouring through a strait with great force; and, by its rapidity, considerably raised above the surface of that part of the ocean into which it runs.

This shallowness and narrowness in many parts of the sea, give also rise to a peculiarity in the tides of some parts of the world. For in many places, and in our own seas in particular, the greatest swell of the tide is not while the moon is at its meridian height, and directly over the place, but some time after it

has declined from thence. The sea, in this case, being obstructed, pursues the moon with what dispatch it can, but does not arrive with all its waters till long after the moon has ceased to operate. Lastly, from this shallowness of the sea, and from its being obstructed by shoals and streights, we may account for the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and the Black Sea, having no sensible tides. These, though to us they seem very extensive, are not however large enough to be affected by the influence of the moon; and as to their communication with the ocean, that is through such narrow inlets, that it is impossible in a few hours time that they should receive and return water enough to raise or depress them in any considerable degree.

In general, therefore, we may observe, that all tides are much higher, and more considerable in the torrid zone, than in the rest of the ocean; the sea in those parts being generally deeper, and less affected by changeable winds, or winding shores*. The greatest tide we know of, is that at the mouth of the river Indus, where the water rises thirty feet in height. How great, therefore, must have been the amazement of Alexander's soldiers at so strange an appearance! They who always before had been accustomed

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 187.

only to the scarcely perceptible risings of the Mediterranean, or the minute intumescence of the Black Sea, when made at once spectators of a river rising and falling thirty feet in a few hours, must no doubt have felt the most extreme awe, and, as we are told *, a mixture of curiosity and apprehension. The tides are also remarkably high on the coasts of Malay, in the streights of Sunda, in the Red Sea, at the mouth of the river St. Lawrence, along the coasts of China and Japan, at Panama, and in the gulph of Bengal. The tides at Tonquin, however, are the most remarkable in the world. In this part there is but one tide, and one ebb, in twenty-four hours; whereas, as we have said before, in other places there are two. Besides, there, twice in each month there is no tide at all, when the moon is near the equinoctial, the water being for some time quite stagnant. These, with some other odd appearances attending the same phenomena, were considered by many as inscrutable; but Sir Isaac Newton, with peculiar sagacity, adjudged them to arise from the concurrence of two tides, one from the South Sea, and the other from the Indian Ocean. Of each of these tides there come successively two every day; two at one time greater, and two at another

* Quintius Curtius.

that are less. The time between the arrival of the two greater, is considered by him as high tide; the time between the two lesser, as ebb. In short, with this clue, that great mathematician solved every appearance, and so established his theory as to silence every opposer.

This fluctuation of the sea from the tides; produces another, and more constant rotation of its waters, from the east to the west, in this respect following the course of the moon. This may be considered as one great and general current of the waters of the sea; and although it be not every where distinguishable, it is nevertheless every where existent, except when opposed by some particular current or eddy, produced by partial and local causes. This tendency of the sea towards the west, is plainly perceivable in all the great streights of the ocean; as, for instance, in those of Magellan, where the tide running in from the east, rises twenty feet high, and continues flowing six hours; whereas the ebb continues but two hours, and the current is directed to the west. This proves that the flux is not equal to the reflux; and that from both results a motion of the sea westward, which is more powerful during the time of the flux than the reflux.

But this motion westward has been sensibly

observed by navigators, in their passage back from India to Madagascar, and so on to Africa. In the great Pacific Ocean also, it is very perceivable: but the places where it is most obvious are, as was said, in those streights which join one ocean to another. In the streights between the Maldivia islands, in the gulph of Mexico, between Cùba and Jucatan. In the streights of the gulph of Paria, the motion is so violent that it hath received the appellation of the Dragon's Mouth. Northward, in the sea of Canada, in Waigat's streights, in the streights of Java, and, in short, in every strait where the ocean on one part pours into the ocean on the other. In this manner, therefore, is the sea carried with an unceasing circulation round the globe; and, at the same time that its waters are pushed back and forward with the tide, they have thus a progressive current to the west, which, though less observable, is not the less real.

Besides these two general motions of the sea, there are others which are particular to many parts of it, and are called currents. These are found to run in all directions, east, west, north, and south; being formed, as was said above, by various causes; the prominence of the shores, the narrowness of the streights, the variations of

the wind, and the inequalities at the bottom. These, though no great object to the philosopher, as their causes are generally local and obvious, are nevertheless of the most material consequence to the mariner; and, without a knowledge of which, he could never succeed. It often has happened, that when a ship has unknowingly got into one of these, every thing seems to go forward with success, the mariners suppose themselves every hour approaching their wish'd-for port, the wind fills their sails, and the ship's prow seems to divide the water; but, at last, by miserable experience they find, that instead of going forward, they have been all the time receding. The business of currents, therefore, makes a considerable article in navigation; and the direction of their stream, and their rapidity, has been carefully set down. This some do by the observation of the surface of the current; or by the driving of the froth along the shore; or by throwing out what is called the log-line, with a buoy made for that purpose, and by the direction and motion of this, they judge of the setting, and the rapidity of the current.

These currents are generally found to be most violent under the equator, where indeed all the motions of the ocean are most perceivable.

Along the coasts of Guinea, if a ship happens to overshoot the mouth of any river it is bound to, the current prevents its return; so that it is obliged to steer out to sea, and take a very large compass, in order to correct the former mistake. These set in a contrary direction to the general motion of the sea westward; and that so strongly, that a passage which with the current is gone in two days, is with difficulty performed in six weeks against it. However, they do not extend above twenty leagues from the coast; and ships going to the East-Indies, take care not to come within the sphere of their action. At Sumatra, the currents, which are extremely rapid, run from south to north: there are also strong currents between Madagascar and the Cape of Good Hope. On the western coasts of America, the current always runs from the south to the north, where a south wind, continually blowing, most probably occasions this phenomena. But the currents that are most remarkable, are those continually flowing into the Mediterranean sea, both from the ocean by the streights of Gibraltar, and at its other extremity, from the Euxine sea by the Archipelago. This is one of the most extraordinary appearances in nature, this large sea receiving not only the numerous rivers that fall into it,

such as the Nile, the Rhone, and the Po, but also a very great influx from the Euxine sea on one part, and the ocean on the other. At the same time, it is seen to return none of those waters it is thus known to receive: outlets running from it there are none; no rivers but such as bring it fresh supplies; no streights but what are constantly pouring their waters into it: it has therefore been the wonder of mankind in every age, how, and by what means this vast concourse of waters are disposed of; or how this sea, which is always receiving, and never returning, is no way fuller than before. In order to account for this, some have said, that the water was re-conveyed by subterraneous passages into the Red Sea *. There is a story told of an Arabian califf, who caught a dolphin in this sea, admiring the beauty of which, he let it go again, having previously marked it by a ring of iron. Some time after a dolphin was caught in the Red Sea, and quickly known by the ring to be the same that had been taken in the Mediterranean before. Such, however, as have not been willing to found their opinions upon a story, have attempted to account for the disposal of the waters of the Mediterranean by evaporation. For this purpose they have entered into long calculations

* Kircher Mund. Subt. vol. i.

upon the extent of its surface, and the quantity of water that would be raised from such a surface in a year. They then compute how much water runs in by its rivers and streights in that time; and find, that the quantity exhausted by evaporation, greatly exceeds the quantity supplied by rivers and seas. And this solution, no doubt would be satisfactory, did not the ocean, and the Euxine, evaporate as well as the Mediterranean: and as these are subject to the same drain, it must follow, that all the seas will in this respect be upon a par; and, therefore, there must be some other cause for this unperceived drain, and continual supply. This seems to be satisfactorily enough accounted for by Doctor Smith, who supposes an under current running through the streights of Gibraltar to carry out as much water into the ocean, as the upper current continually carries in from it. To confirm this, he observes, that nearer home, between the north and south foreland, the tide is known to run one way at top, and the ebb another way at bottom. This double current he also confirms by an experiment communicated to him by an able seaman, who being with one of the king's frigates in the Baltic, found he went with his boat into the mid-stream, and was carried violently by the current; upon which a basket was sunk, with a large cannon-

ball, to a certain depth of water, which gave a check to the boat's motion; as the basket sunk still lower, the boat was driven, by the force of the water below, against the upper current; and the lower the basket was let down, the stronger the under current was found, and the quicker was the boat's motion against the upper stream, which seemed not to be above four fathom deep. From hence we may readily infer, that the same cause may operate at the streights of Gibraltar; and that while the Mediterranean seems replenishing at top, it may be emptying at bottom.

The number of the currents at sea are impossible to be recounted, nor indeed are they always known; new ones are daily produced by a variety of causes, and as quickly disappear. When a regular current is opposed by another in a narrow strait, or where the bottom of the sea is very uneven, a whirlpool is often formed. These were formerly considered as the most formidable obstructions to navigation, and the ancient poets and historians speak of them with terror; they are described as swallowing up ships, and dashing them against the rocks at the bottom: apprehension did not fail to add imaginary terrors to the description, and placed at the center of the whirlpool a dreadful den,

fraught with monsters whose howlings served to add new horrors to the dashings of the deep. Mankind at present, however, view these eddies of the sea with very little apprehension; and some have wondered how the ancients could have so much overcharged their descriptions. But all this is very naturally accounted for. In those times when navigation was as yet but beginning, and the slightest concussion of the waves generally sent the poor adventurer to the bottom, it is not to be wondered at that he was terrified at the violent agitations in one of these. When his little ship, but ill fitted for opposing the fury of the sea, was got within the vortex, there was then no possibility of ever returning. To add to the fatality, they were always near the shore; and along the shore was the only place where this ill provided mariner durst venture to sail. These were, therefore, dreadful impediments to his navigation; for if he attempted to pass between them and the shore, he was sometimes sucked in by the eddy; and if he attempted to avoid them out at sea, he was often sunk by the storm. But in our time, and in our present improved state of navigation, Charybdis, and the Euripus, with all the other irregular currents of the Mediterranean, are no longer formidable. Mr. Addison not attending

to this train of thinking, upon passing through the streights of Sicily, was surpris'd at the little there was of terror in the present appearance of Sylla and Charybdis; and seems to be of opinion, that their agitations are much diminished since the times of antiquity. In fact, from the reasons above, all the wonders of the Mediterranean sea are described in much higher colours than they merit, to us who are acquainted with the more magnificent terrors of the ocean. The Mediterranean is one of the smoothest and most gentle seas in the world; its tides are scarce perceivable, except in the gulph of Venice, and shipwrecks are less known there than in any other part of the world.

It is in the ocean, therefore, that these whirlpools are particularly dangerous, where the tides are violent, and the tempests fierce. To mention only one, that called the Maelftroom, upon the coasts of Norway, which is considered as the most dreadful and voracious in the world. The name it has received from the natives, signifies the navel of the sea, since they suppose that a great share of the water of the sea is sucked up and discharged by its vortex. A minute description of the internal parts is not to be expected, since none who were there ever returned to bring back information. The body

of the waters that form this whirlpool, are extended in a circle above thirteen miles in circumference *. In the midst of this stands a rock, against which the tide in its ebb is dashed with inconceivable fury. At this time it instantly swallows up all things that come within the sphere of its violence, trees, timber, and shipping. No skill in the mariner, nor strength of rowing, can work an escape: the sailor at the helm finds the ship at first go in a current opposite to his intentions; his vessel's motion, tho' slow in the beginning, becomes every moment more rapid; it goes round in circles still narrower and narrower, till at last it is dashed against the rocks, and instantly disappears: nor is it seen again for six hours: till the tide flowing, it is vomited forth with the same violence with which it was drawn in. The noise of this dreadful vortex still farther contributes to encrease its terror, which with the dashing of the waters, and the dreadful valley, if it may be so called, caused by their circulation, makes one of the most tremendous objects in nature.

* Kircher Mund. Subt. vol. i. p. 156.

C H A P. XVII.

Of the Changes produced by the Sea upon the Earth.

FROM what has been said, as well of the earth as of the sea, they both appear to be in continual fluctuation. The earth, the common promptuary that supplies subsistence to men, animals, and vegetables, is continually furnishing its stores to their support. But the matter which is thus derived from it, is soon restored and laid down again to be prepared for fresh mutations. The transmigration of souls is no doubt false and whimsical; but nothing can be more certain than the transmigration of bodies: the spoils of the meanest reptile may go to the formation of a prince; and, on the contrary, as the poet has it, the body of Cæsar may be employed in stopping a beer barrel. From this, and other causes, therefore, the earth is in continual change. Its internal fires, the deviation of its rivers, and the falling of its mountains, are daily altering its surface; and geography can scarce recollect the lakes and the vallies that history once described.

But these changes are nothing to the insta-

bility of the ocean. It would seem that inquietude was as natural to it as its fluidity. It is first seen with a constant and equable motion going towards the west; the tides then interrupt this progression, and for a time drive the waters in a contrary direction; beside these agitations, the currents act their part in a smaller sphere, being generally greatest where the other motions of the sea are least; namely, nearest the shore: the winds also contribute their share in this universal fluctuation; so that scarce any part of the sea is wholly seen to stagnate.

*Nil enim quiescit, undis impellitur unda,
Et spiritus et calor toto se corpore miscent.*

As this great element is thus changed, and continually labouring internally, it may be readily supposed that it produces correspondent changes upon its shores, and those parts of the earth subject to its influence. In fact, it is every day making considerable alterations, either by overflowing its shores in one place, or deserting them in others; by covering over whole tracts of country, that were cultivated and peopled, at one time; or by leaving its bed to be appropriated to the purposes of vegetation, and to supply a new theatre for human industry at another.

In this struggle between the earth and the sea for dominion, the greatest number of our shores seem to defy the whole rage of the waves, both by their height, and the rocky materials of which they are composed. The coasts of Italy, for instance *, are bordered with rocks of marble of different kinds, the quarries of which may easily be distinguished at a distance from sea, and appear like perpendicular columns, of the most beautiful kinds of marble, ranged along the shore. In general, the coasts of France, from Brest to Bourdeaux, are composed of rocks; as are also those of Spain and England, which defend the land, and only are interrupted here and there to give an egress to rivers, and to grant the conveniences of bays and harbours to our shipping. It may be in general remarked, that wherever the sea is most violent and furious, there the boldest shores, and of the most compact materials, are found to oppose it. There are many shores several hundred feet perpendicular, against which the sea, when swollen with tides or storms, rises and beats with inconceivable fury. In † the Orkneys, where the shores are thus formed, it sometimes, when agitated by a storm, rises two hundred feet perpendicular, and dashes up its spray,

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 199.

† Idem, vol. ii. p. 191.

together with sand, and other substances that compose its bottom, upon land, like showers of rain.

From hence, therefore, we may conceive how the violence of the sea, and the boldness of the shore, may be said to have made each other. Where the sea meets no obstacles, it spreads its waters with a gentle intumescence, till all its power is destroyed, by its wanting depth to aid its motion. But when its progress is checked in the midst, by the prominence of rocks, or the abrupt elevation of the land, it dashes with all the force of its depth against the obstacle, and forms, by its repeated violence, that abruptness of the shore which confines its impetuosity. Where the sea is extremely deep, or very much vexed by tempests, it is no small obstacle that can confine its rage; and for this reason we see the boldest shores projected against the deepest waters; all less impediments having long before been surmounted and washed away. Perhaps of all the shores in the world, there is not one so high as that to the west of St. Kilda, which, upon a late admeasurement *, was found to be six hundred fathom perpendicular above the surface of the sea. Here also, the sea is deep, turbulent,

* Description of St. Kilda.

and stormy; so that it requires great force in the shore to oppose its violence. In many parts of the world, and particularly upon the coasts of the East Indies, the shores, though not high above water, are generally very deep, and consequently the waves roll against land with great weight and irregularity. This rising of the waves against the shore, is called by mariners, the surf of the sea; and in shipwrecks is generally fatal to such as attempt to swim on shore. In this case, no dexterity in the swimmer, no float he can use, neither swimming girdle nor cork jacket will save him; the weight of the superincumbent wave breaks upon him at once, and crushes him with certain ruin. Some few of the natives, however, have the art of swimming and of navigating their little boats near those shores, where an European is sure of instant destruction.

In places where the force of the sea is less violent, or its tides less rapid, the shores are generally seen to descend with a more gradual declivity. Over these, the waters of the tide steal by almost imperceptible degrees, covering them for a large extent, and leaving them bare on its recess. Upon these shores, as was said, the sea seldom beats with any great violence, as a large wave has not depth sufficient to float it

onwards, so that here only are to be seen gentle surges making calmly towards land, and lessening as they approach. As the sea, in the former description, is generally seen to present prospects of tumult, and uproar, here it more usually exhibits a scene of repose and tranquil beauty. Its waters, which when surveyed from the precipice, afforded a muddy greenish hue, arising from their depth and position to the eye *, when regarded from a shelving shore, wear the colour of the sky, and seem rising to meet it. The deafening noise of the deep sea, is here converted into gentle murmurs; instead of the water's dashing against the face of the rock, it advances and recedes, still going forward, but with just force enough to push its weeds and shells, by insensible approaches, to the shore.

There are still other shores, beside those already described, which either have been raised by art to oppose the sea's approaches, or from the sea's gaining ground, are threatened with imminent destruction. The sea's being thus seen to give and take away lands at pleasure, is, without question, one of the most extraordinary considerations in all natural history. In some places it is seen to obtain the superiority by slow and certain approaches; or to burst in at once,

* Newton's Optics, p. 163—167.

and overwhelm all things in undistinguished destruction; in other places it departs from its shores, and where its waters have been known to rage, it leaves fields covered with the most beautiful verdure.

The formation of new lands by the sea's continually bringing its sediment to one place, and by the accumulation of its sands in another, is easily conceived. We have had many instances of this in England. The island of Oxney, which is adjacent to Romney-marsh, was produced in this manner. This had for a long time been a low level, continually in danger of being overflowed by the river Rother; but the sea, by its depositions, has gradually raised the bottom of the river, while it has hollowed the mouth; so that the one is sufficiently secured from inundations, and the other is deep enough to admit ships of considerable burthen. The like also may be seen at that bank called the Dogger-sands, where two tides meet, and which thus receive new increase every day, so that in time the place seems to promise fair for being habitable earth. On many parts of the coasts of France, England, Holland, Germany, and Prussia, the sea has been sensibly known to retire *. Hubert Thomas asserts, in his Description of the Country of Liege, that the

* Buffon, vol. vi. p. 424.

sea formerly encompassed the city of Tongres, which, however, is at present thirty-five leagues distant from it: this assertion he supports by many strong reasons; and among others, by the iron rings fixed in the walls of the town, for fastening the ships that came into the port. In Italy there is a considerable piece of ground gained at the mouth of the river Arno; and Ravenna, that once stood by the sea-side is now considerably removed from the same. But we need scarce mention these, when we find that the whole kingdom of Holland seems to be a conquest upon the sea, and in a manner rescued from its bosom. The surface of the earth, in this country, is below the level of the bed of the sea; and I remember, upon approaching the coast, to have looked down upon it from the sea, as into a valley; however, it is every day rising higher by the depositions made upon it, both by the sea, the Rhine, and the Meuse; and those parts which formerly admitted large men of war, are now known to be too shallow to receive ships of very moderate burthen*. The province of Jucatan, a peninsula in the gulph of Mexico, was formerly a part of the sea: this tract, which stretches out into the ocean an hundred leagues, and which is above thirty

* Buffon, vol. vi. p. 424.

broad, is every where, at a moderate depth below the surface, composed of shells, which evince that its land once formed the bed of the sea. In France, the town of Aigues Mortes was a port in the times of St. Louis, which is now removed more than four miles from the sea. Psalmodi, in the same kingdom, was an island in the year 815, but is now more than six miles from the shore. All along the coasts of Norfolk, I am very well assured, that in the memory of man, the sea has gained fifty yards in some places, and has lost as much in others.

Thus numerous, therefore, are the instances of new lands having been produced from the sea, which, as we see, is brought about two different ways : first, by the waters raising banks of sand and mud where their sediment is deposited; and secondly, by their relinquishing the shore entirely, and leaving it unoccupied to the industry of man.

But as the sea has been thus known to recede from some lands, so has it, by fatal experience, been found to encroach upon others : and, probably, these depredations on one part of the shore, may account for their dereliction from another; for the current which rested upon some certain bank, having got an egress in some other place, it no longer presses upon its former bed,

but pours all its stream into the new entrance, so that every inundation of the sea may be attended with some correspondent dereliction of another shore.

However this be, we have numerous histories of the sea's inundations, and its burying whole provinces in its bosom. Many countries that have been thus destroyed, still bear melancholy witness to the truth of history; and shew the tops of their houses, and the spires of their steeples, still standing at the bottom of the water. One of the most considerable inundations we have in history, is that which happened in the reign of Henry I. which overflowed the estates of the Earl Godwin, and forms now that bank called the Goodwin sands. In the year 1546, a similar irruption of the sea destroyed an hundred thousand persons in the territory of Dort; and yet a greater number round Dullart. In Friezland, and Zealand, there were more than three hundred villages overwhelmed; and their remains continue still visible at the bottom of the water in a clear day. The Baltic sea has, by slow degrees, covered a large part of Pomerania; and, among others, destroyed and overwhelmed the famous port of Vineta. In the same manner, the Norwegian sea has formed several little islands from the main land, and still

daily advances upon the continent. The German sea has advanced upon the shores of Holland, near Catt, so that the ruins of an ancient citadel of the Romans, which was formerly built upon this coast, are now actually under water. To these accidents several more might be added; our own historians, and those of other countries, abound with them; almost every flat shore of any extent, being able to shew something that it has lost, or something that it has gained from the sea.

There are some shores on which the sea has made temporary depredations; where it has overflowed, and after remaining perhaps some ages, it has again retired of its own accord, or been driven back by the industry of man*. There are many lands in Norway, Scotland, and the Maldivia islands, that are at one time covered with water, and at another free. The country round the Isle of Ely, in the times of Bede, about a thousand years ago, was one of the most delightful spots in the whole kingdom. It was not only richly cultivated, and produced all the necessaries of life, but grapes also that afforded the most excellent wine. The accounts of that time are copious in the description of its verdure and fertility; its rich pastures, covered

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 425.

with flowers and herbage; its beautiful shades, and wholesome air. But the sea breaking in, upon the land, overwhelmed the whole country, took possession of the soil, and totally destroyed one of the most beautiful vallies in the world. Its air, from being dry and healthful, from that time became most unwholsome, and clogged with vapours; and the small part of the country that, by being higher than the rest, escaped the deluge, was soon rendered uninhabitable, from its noxious vapours. Thus this country continued under water for some centuries; till, at last, the sea, by the same caprice which had prompted its invasions, began to abandon the earth in like manner. It has continued for some ages to relinquish its former conquests; and although the inhabitants can neither boast the longevity, nor the luxuries of their former pre-occupants, yet they find ample means of subsistence; and if they happen to survive the first years of their residence there, they are often known to arrive at a good old age.

But although history be silent as to many other inundations of the like kind, where the sea has overflowed the country, and afterwards retired, yet we have numberless testimonies of another nature, that prove it beyond the possibility of doubt: I mean those numerous trees that are found buried at considerable depths

in places where either rivers, or the sea, has accidentally overflown *. At the mouth of the river Ness, near Bruges, in Flanders, at the depth of fifty feet, are found great quantities of trees lying as close to each other as they do in a wood: the trunks, the branches, and the leaves, are in such perfect preservation, that the particular kind of each tree may instantly be known. About five hundred years ago, this very ground was known to have been covered with the sea; nor is there any history or tradition of its having been dry ground, which we can have no doubt must have been the case. Thus we see a country flourishing in verdure, producing large forests, and trees of various kinds, overwhelmed by the sea. We see this element depositing its sediment to an heighth of fifty feet; and its waters must, therefore, have risen much higher. We see the same, after it has thus overwhelmed, and sunk the land so deep beneath its slime, capriciously retiring from the same coasts, and leaving that habitable once more, which it had formerly destroyed. All this is wonderful; and perhaps, instead of attempting to enquire after the cause, which has hitherto been inscrutable, it will best become us to rest satisfied with admiration.

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 403.

At the city of Modena in Italy, and about four miles round it, wherever it is dug, when the workmen arrive at the depth of sixty-three feet, they come to a bed of chalk, which they bore with an augre five feet deep: they then withdraw from the pit, before the augre is removed, and upon its extraction, the water bursts up through the aperture with great violence, and quickly fills this new made well, which continues full, and is affected neither by rains nor droughts. But that which is most remarkable in this operation, is the layers of earth as we descend. At the depth of fourteen feet, are found the ruins of an ancient city, paved streets, houses, floors, and different pieces of Mosaic. Under this is found a solid earth, that would induce one to think had never been removed; however, under it is found a soft oozy earth, made up of vegetables; and at twenty-six feet depth, large trees entire, such as walnut-trees, with the walnuts still sticking on the stem, and their leaves and branches in exact preservation. At twenty-eight feet deep, a soft chalk is found, mixed with a vast quantity of shells; and this bed is eleven feet thick. Under this, vegetables are found again, with leaves, and branches of trees as before; and thus alternately chalk and vegetable earth to the depth of sixty-three

feet. These are the layers wherever the workmen attempt to bore; while in many of them, they also find pieces of charcoal, bones, and bits of iron. From this description, therefore, it appears, that this country has been alternately overflowed and deserted by the sea, one age after another: nor were these overflowings and retirings of trifling depth, or of short continuance. When the sea burst in, it must have been a long time in overwhelming the branches of the fallen forest with its sediment; and still longer in forming a regular bed of shells eleven feet over them. It must have, therefore, taken an age, at least, to make any one of these layers; and we may conclude, that it must have been many ages employed in the production of them all. The land also, upon being deserted, must have had time to grow compact, to gather fresh fertility, and to be drained of its waters before it could be disposed to vegetation; or before its trees could have shot forth again to maturity.

We have instances nearer home of the same kind, given us in the Philosophical Transactions; one of them by Mr. Derham. An inundation of the sea, at Dagenham, in Essex, laying bare a part of the adjacent pasture, for above two hundred feet wide, and, in some places, twenty deep, it discovered a number of trees that had

lain there for many ages before ; these trees, by lying long under ground, were become black and hard, and their fibres so tough, that one might as easily break a wire, as any of them: they lay so thick in the place where they were found, that in many parts he could step from one to another: he conceived also, that not only all the adjacent marshes, for several hundred acres, were covered underneath with such timber, but also the marshes along the mouth of the Thames, for several miles. The meeting with these trees at such depths, he ascribes to the sediment of the river, and the tides, which constantly washing over them, have always left some part of their substance behind, so as, by repeated alluvions, to work a bed of vegetable earth over them, to the height at which he found it.

The levels of Hatfield-Chace, in Yorkshire, a tract of above eighteen thousand acres, which was yearly overflowed, was reduced to arable and pasture-land, by one Sir Cornelius Vermusden, a Dutchman. At the bottom of this wide extent, are found millions of the roots and bodies of trees, of such as this island either formerly did, or does at present produce. The roots of all stand in their proper postures; and by them, as thick as ever they could

grow, the respective trunks of each, some above thirty yards long. The oaks, some of which have been sold for fifteen pounds a piece, are as black as ebony, very lasting, and close grained. The ash-trees are as soft as earth, and are commonly cut in pieces by the workmen's spades, and as soon as flung up into the open air, turn to dust. But all the rest, even the willows themselves, which are softer than the ash, preserve their substance and texture to this very day. Some of the firs appear to have vegetated, even after they were fallen, and to have, from their branches, struck up large trees, as great as the parent trunk. It is observable, that many of these trees have been burnt, some quite through, some on one side, some have been found chopped and squared, others riven with great wooden wedges, all sufficiently manifesting, that the country which was deluged, had formerly been inhabited. Near a great root of one tree, were found eight coins of the Roman emperors; and, in some places, the marks of the ridge and furrow were plainly perceivable, which testified that the ground had formerly been patient of cultivation.

The learned naturalist who has given this description *, has pretty plainly evinced, that

* Phil. Transf. vol. iv. part ii. p. 214.

this forest, in particular, must have been thus levelled by the Romans; and that the falling of the trees, must have contributed to the accumulation of the waters. "The Romans," says he, "when the Britons fled, always pursued them into the fortresses of low woods, and miry forests: in these, the wild natives found shelter; and, when opportunity offered, issued out, and fell upon their invaders without mercy. In this manner, the Romans were at length so harassed, that orders were issued out for cutting down all the woods and forests in Britain. In order to effect this, and destroy the enemy the easier, they set fire to the woods, composed of pines, and other inflammable timber, which spreading, the conflagration destroyed not only the forest, but infinite numbers of the wretched inhabitants who had taken shelter therein: When the pine-trees had thus done what mischief they could, the Romans then brought their army nearer, and, with whole legions of the captive Britons, cut down most of the trees that were yet left standing; leaving only here and there some great trees untouched, as monuments of their fury. These, unneedful of their labour, being destitute of the support of the underwood, and of their neighbouring trees, were easily overthrown by the winds, and, without inter-

ruption, remained on the places where they happened to fall. The forest, thus fallen, must necessarily have stopped up the currents, both from land and sea; and turned into great lakes, what were before but temporary streams. The working of the waters here, the consumption and decay of rotten boughs and branches, and the vast encrease of water-moss which flourishes upon marshy grounds, soon formed a covering over the trunks of the fallen trees, and raised the earth several feet above its former level. The earth thus every day swelling, by a continual encrease from the sediment of the waters, and by the lightness of the vegetable substances of which it was composed, soon overtopt the waters by which this intumescence was at first effected; so that it entirely got rid of its inundations, or only demanded a slight assistance from man for that purpose." And this may be the origin of all bogs whatsoever, which are formed by the putrefaction of vegetable substances, mixed with the mud and slime deposited by waters, and at length acquiring a sufficient consistency.

From this we see what powerful effects the sea is capable of producing upon its shores, either by overflowing some, or deserting others; by

altering the direction of these, and rendering those craggy and precipitate, which before were shelving. But the influence it has upon these, is nothing to that which it has upon that great body of earth which forms its bottom. It is at the bottom of the sea that the greatest wonders are performed, and the most rapid changes are produced; it is there that the motion of the tides and the currents have their whole force, and agitate the substances of which their bed is composed. But all these are almost wholly hid from human curiosity: the miracles of the deep are performed in secret; and we have but little information from its abysses, except what we receive by inspection at very shallow depths, or by the plummet, or from divers, who are known to descend from twenty to thirty fathom *.

The eye can reach but a very short way into the depths of the sea; and that only when its surface is glassy and serene. In many seas it perceives nothing but a bright sandy plain at bottom, extending for several hundred miles, without an intervening object. But in others, particularly in the Red Sea, it is very different: the whole bottom of this extensive bed of waters is, literally speaking, a forest of sub-

* Phil. Transf. vol. iv. part ii. p. 192.

marine plants, and corals formed by insects for their habitation, sometimes branching out to a great extent. Here are seen the madrepores, the sponges, mosses, sea mushrooms, and other marine productions, covering every part of the bottom; so that some have even supposed the sea to have taken its name from the colour of its plants below. However, these plants are by no means peculiar to this sea, as they are found in great quantities in the Persian gulph, along the coasts of Africa, and those of Provence and Catalonia.

The bottom of many parts of the sea near America, presents a very different, though a very beautiful appearance. This is covered with vegetables, which make it look as green as a meadow, and beneath are seen thousands of turtles, and other sea animals, feeding thereon.

In order to extend our knowledge of the sea to greater depths, recourse has been had to the plummet; which is generally made of a lump of lead of about forty pounds weight, fastened to a cord *. This, however, only answers in moderate depths; for when a deep sea is to be sounded, the matter of which the cord is composed, being lighter than the water, floats upon

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 5.

it, and when let down to a considerable depth, its length so encreases its surface, that it is often sufficient to prevent the lead from sinking; so that this may be the reason that some parts of the sea are said to have no bottom.

In general, we learn from the plummet, that the bottom of the sea is tolerably even where it has been examined; and that the farther from the shore, the sea is in general the deeper. Notwithstanding, now and then, in the midst of a great and unfathomable ocean, we often find an island raising its head, and singly braving its fury. Such islands may be considered as the mountains of the deep; and, could we for a moment imagine the waters of the ocean removed, or dried away, we should probably find the inequalities of its bed resembling those that are found at land. Here extensive plains; there valleys; and, in many places, mountains of amazing height. M. Buache has actually given us a map of that part of its bottom, which lies between Africa and America, taken from the several soundings of mariners: in it we find the same uneven surface that we do upon land, the same eminences, and the same depressions. In such an imaginary prospect, however, there would be this difference, that as the tops of land mountains appear the most barren

and rocky, the tops of sea-mountains would be found the most verdant and fruitful.

The plummet, which thus gives us some idea of the inequalities of the bottom, leaves us totally in the dark as to every other particular; recourse, therefore, has been had to divers: these, either being bred up in this dangerous way of life, and accustomed to remain some time under water without breathing, or assisted by means of a diving-bell, have been able to return some confused and uncertain accounts of the places below. In the great diving-bell improved by Doctor Halley, which was large enough to contain five men, and was supplied with fresh air by buckets, that alternately rose and fell, they descended fifty fathom. In this huge machine, which was let down from the mast of the ship, the doctor himself went down to the bottom; where, when the sea was clear, and especially when the sun shone, he could see perfectly well to write or read, and much more to take up any thing that was underneath: at other times, when the water was troubled and thick, it was as dark as night below, so that he was obliged to keep a candle lighted at the bottom. But there is one thing very remarkable, which is, that the water which from above was usually seen of a green colour, when looked at from below, ap-

peared to him of a very different one, casting a redness upon one of his hands, like that of damask roses *.—A proof of the sea's taking its colour not from any thing floating in it, but from the different reflexions of the rays of light. Upon the whole, the accounts we have received from the bottom, by this contrivance, are but few. We learn from it, and from divers in general, that while the surface of the sea may be deformed by tempests, it is usually calm and temperate below †; that some divers who have gone down when the weather was calm, and came up when it was tempestuous, were surprized at their not perceiving the change at the bottom. This, however, must not be supposed to obtain with regard to the tides, and the currents, as they are seen constantly shifting their bottom; taking their bed with great violence from one place, and depositing it upon another. We are informed, also, by divers, that the sea grows colder in proportion as they descend to the bottom; that as far as the sun's rays pierce, it is influenced by their warmth; but lower, the cold becomes almost intolerable. A person of quality, who had been himself a diver, as Mr. Boyle informs us, declared, that though he seldom descended above three or four

* Newton's Optic, p. 56. † Boyle, vol. iii. p. 242.

fathoms, yet he found it so much colder than near the top, that he could not well endure it; and that being let down in a great diving-bell, although the water could not immediately touch him, he found the air extremely cold upon his first arrival at the bottom.

From divers also we learn, that the sea in many places is filled with rocks at bottom; and that among their cliffs, and upon their sides, various substances sprout forward, which are either really vegetables, or the nests of insects, encreased to some magnitude. Some of these assume the shape of beautiful flowers; and, tho' soft, when taken up, soon harden, and are kept in the cabinets of the curious.

But, of all those divers who have brought us information from the bottom of the deep, the famous Nicola Pesce, whose performances are told us by Kircher, is the most celebrated. I will not so much as pretend to vouch for the veracity of Kircher's account, which he assures us he had from the archives of the kings of Sicily; but it may serve to enliven an heavy chapter. "In the times of Frederic, king of Sicily, there lived a celebrated diver, whose name was Nicolas, and who, from his amazing skill in swimming, and his perseverance under water, was surnamed the fish.

This man had, from his infancy, been used to the sea; and earned his scanty subsistence by diving for corals, and oysters; which he sold to the villages on shore. His long acquaintance with the sea, at last, brought it to be almost his natural element. He frequently was known to spend five days in the midst of the waves, without any other provisions than the fish which he caught there, and ate raw. He often swam over from Sicily into Calabria, a tempestuous and dangerous passage, carrying letters from the king. He was frequently known to swim among the gulphs of the Lipari islands, no way apprehensive of danger.

“ Some mariners out at sea one day observed something at some distance from them, which they regarded as a sea-monster; but upon its approach, it was known to be Nicolas, whom they took into their ship. When they asked him whither he was going in so stormy and rough a sea, and at such a distance from land, he shewed them a packet of letters, which he was carrying to one of the towns of Italy, exactly done up in a leather bag, in such a manner as that they could not be wetted by the sea. He kept them thus company for some time on their voyage, conversing, and asking questions;

and after eating an hearty meal with them, he took his leave, and jumping into the sea, pursued his voyage alone.

“ In order to aid these powers of enduring in the deep, nature seemed to have assisted him in a very extraordinary manner; for the spaces between his fingers and toes were webbed, as in a goose; and his chest became so very capacious, that he could take in at one inspiration, as much breath as would serve him for an whole day.

“ The account of so extraordinary a person did not fail to reach the king himself; who, actuated by the general curiosity, ordered that Nicolas should be brought before him. It was no easy matter to find Nicolas, who generally spent his time in the solitudes of the deep; but at last, however, after much searching, he was found, and brought before his majesty. The curiosity of this monarch had been long excited by the accounts he had heard of the bottom of the gulph of Charybdis; he now, therefore, conceived that it would be a proper opportunity to have more certain information. He therefore commanded our poor diver to examine the bottom of this dreadful whirlpool; and, as an incitement to his obedience, ordered a golden

cup to be flung into it. Nicolas was not insensible of the danger to which he was exposed; dangers best known only to himself; and he therefore presumed to remonstrate: but the hopes of the reward, the desire of pleasing the king, and the pleasure of shewing his skill, at last prevailed. He instantly jumped into the gulph, and was swallowed as instantly up in its bosom. He continued for three quarters of an hour below; during which time, the king and his attendants remained upon shore, anxious for his fate; but he at last appeared, buffeting upon the surface, holding the cup in triumph in one hand, and making his way good among the waves with the other. It may be supposed he was received with applause, upon his arrival on shore: the cup was made the reward of his adventure; the king ordered him to be taken proper care of; and, as he was somewhat fatigued and debilitated by his labour, after an hearty meal, he was put to bed, and permitted to refresh himself by sleeping.

“ When his spirits were thus restored, he was again brought, to satisfy the king’s curiosity with a narrative of the wonders he had seen; and his account was to the following effect. He would never, he said, have obeyed the king’s commands, had he been apprized of half the

dangers that were before him. There were four things, he said, that rendered the gulph dreadful, not only to men, but even to the fishes themselves: first, the force of the water bursting up from the bottom, which require great strength to resist; secondly, the abruptness of the rocks, that on every side threatened destruction; thirdly, the force of the whirlpool, dashing against those rocks; and fourthly, the number and magnitude of the polypous fish, some of which appeared as large as a man, and which every where sticking against the rocks, projected their fibrous arms to entangle him. Being asked how he was able so readily to find the cup that had been thrown in, he replied, that it happened to be flung by the waves into the cavity of a rock, against which he himself was urged in his descent. This account, however, did not satisfy the king's curiosity: being requested to venture once more into the gulph for further discoveries, he at first refused; but the king, desirous of having the most exact information possible of all things to be found in the gulph, repeated his solicitations; and, to give them still greater weight, produced a larger cup than the former, and added also a purse of gold. Upon these considerations, the unfortunate Pefscola once again plunged into the whirlpool, and was never heard of more."

C H A P. XVIII.

A summary Account of the Mechanical Properties of Air.

HAVING described the earth and the sea, we now ascend into that fluid which surrounds them both; and which, in some measure, supports and supplies all animated nature. As upon viewing the bottom of the ocean from its surface, we see an infinity of animals moving therein, and seeking food; so were some superior being to regard the earth at a proper distance, he might consider us in the same light: he might, from his superior station, behold a number of busy little beings, immersed in the aerial fluid, that every where surrounds them, and sedulously employed in procuring the means of subsistence. This fluid, though too fine for the gross perception of its inhabitants, might, to his nicer organs of sight, be very visible; and, while he at once saw into its operations, he might smile at the varieties of human conjecture concerning it: he might readily discern, perhaps, the height above the surface of the earth to which this fluid atmosphere reaches: he might exactly determine that peculiar form of its parts which gives it the spring or elasticity with which it is endued: he might distinguish which of its

parts were pure incorruptible air, and which only made for a little time to assume the appearance, so as to be quickly returned back to the element from whence it came. But as for us, who are immersed at the bottom of this gulph, we must be contented with a more confined knowledge; and, wanting a proper point of prospect, remain satisfied with a combination of the effects.

One of the first things, therefore, that our senses informs us of, is, that although the air is too fine for our sight, it is very obvious to our touch. Although we cannot see the wind contained in a bladder, we can very readily feel its resistance; and though the hurricane may want colour, we often fatally experience that it does not want force. We have equal experience of the air's spring or elasticity: the bladder, when pressed, returns again, upon the pressure being taken away; a bottle, when filled, often bursts, from the spring of air which is included.

So far the slightest experience reaches; but, by carrying experiment a little farther, we learn, that air also is heavy: a round glass vessel being emptied of its air, and accurately weighed, has been found lighter than when it was weighed with the air in it. Upon computing the superior weight of the full vessel, a cubic foot

of air is found to weigh something more than an ounce.

From this experiment, therefore, we learn, that the earth, and all things upon its surface, are every where covered with a ponderous fluid, which rising very high over our heads, must be proportionably heavy. For instance, as in the sea, a man at the depth of twenty feet, sustains a greater weight of water than a man at the depth of but ten feet; so will a man at the bottom of a valley have a greater weight of air over him, than a man on the top of a mountain.

From hence we may conclude, that we sustain a very great weight of air; and although, like men walking at the bottom of the sea, we cannot feel the weight which presses equally round us, yet the pressure is not the less real. As in morals, we seldom know the blessings that surround us till we are deprived of them, so here we do not perceive the weight of the ambient fluid till a part of it is taken away. If, by any means, we contrive to take away the pressure of the air from any one part of our bodies, we are soon made sensible of the weight upon the other parts. Thus, if we clap our hand upon the mouth of a vessel from whence the air has been taken away, there will thus be air on one side, and none on the other; upon which, we shall in-

stantly find the hand violently sucked inwards, which is nothing more than the weight of the air upon the back of the hand that crushes it into the space which is empty below.

As by this experiment, therefore, we perceive that the air presses with great weight upon every thing on the surface of the earth, so by other experiments we learn the exact weight with which it presses. First, if the air be exhausted out of any vessel, a drinking-glass for instance *, and this vessel be set with the mouth downwards in water, the water will rise up into the empty space, and fill the inverted glass; for the external air will, in this case, press up the water, where there is no weight to resist; as, one part of a bed being pressed, makes the other parts, that have no weight upon them, rise. In this case, therefore, as was said, the water being pressed without, will rise in the glass; and would continue to rise (if the empty glass were tall enough) thirty-two feet high. In fact, there have been pipes made purposely for this experiment, of above thirty-two feet high; in which, upon being exhausted, the water has always risen to the height of thirty-two feet: there it

* This may be done by burning a bit of paper in the same, and then quickly turning it down upon the water.

has always rested, and never ascended higher. From this, therefore, we learn, that the weight of the air which presses up the water, is equal to a pillar or column of water, which is thirty-two feet high; as it is just able to raise such a column, and no more. In other words, the surface of the earth is every where covered with a weight of air, which is equivalent to a covering of thirty-two feet deep of water; or to a weight of twenty-nine inches and an half of quicksilver, which is known to be just as heavy as the former.

Thus, therefore, we see that the air at the surface of the earth, is just as heavy as thirty-two feet of water, or twenty-nine inches and an half of quicksilver; and it is easily found, by computation, that to raise water thirty-two feet, will require a weight of fifteen pounds upon every square inch. Now, if we are fond of computations, we have only to calculate how many square inches are in the surface of an ordinary human body, and allowing every inch to sustain fifteen pounds, we may amaze ourselves at the weight of air we sustain. It has been computed, and found, that our ordinary load of air amounts to within a little of forty thousand pounds: this is wonderful! but wondering is not the way to grow wise.

Notwithstanding this be our ordinary load, and our usual supply, there are at different times very great variations. The air is not, like water, equally heavy at all seasons; but sometimes is lighter, and sometimes more heavy. It is sometimes more compressed, and sometimes more elastic or springy, which produces the same effects as an encrease of its weight. The air which at one time raises water thirty-two feet in the tube, and quicksilver twenty-nine inches, will not at another raise the one to thirty feet, or the other to twenty-six inches. This makes, therefore, a very great difference in the weight we sustain; and we are actually known, by computation, to carry at one time four thousand pounds of air more than at another.

The reason of this surprizing difference in the weight of air, is either owing to its pressure from above, or to an encrease of vapour floating in it. Its encreased pressure is the consequence of its spring or elasticity, which cold and heat sensibly affect, and are continually changing.

This elasticity of the air is one of its most amazing properties; and to which it should seem nothing can set bounds. A body of air that may be contained in a nut-shell, may easily, with heat, be dilated into a sphere of unknown dimensions. On the contrary, the air contained

in an house, may be compressed into a cavity not larger than the eye of a needle. In short, no bounds can be set to its confinement or expansion; at least, experiment has hitherto found its attempts indefinite. In every situation, it retains its elasticity; and the more closely we compress it, the more strongly does it resist the pressure. If to the encreasing the elasticity on one side by compression, we encrease it on the other side by heat, the force of both soon becomes irresistible; and a certain French philosopher supposed *, that air thus confined, and expanding, was sufficient for the explosion of a world.

Many instruments have been formed to measure and determine these different properties of the air; and which serve several useful purposes. The barometer serves to measure its weight; to tell us when it is heavier, and when lighter. It is composed of a glass tube or pipe, of about thirty inches in length, closed up at one end; this tube is then filled with quicksilver; this done, the maker clapping his finger upon the open end, inverts the tube, and plunges the open end, finger and all, into a basin of quicksilver, and then takes his finger away: now the quicksilver in the tube will, by its own weight,

* Monsieur Amontons.

endeavour to descend into that in the bason; but the external air, pressing on the surface of the quicksilver in the bason without, and no air being in the tube at top, the quicksilver will continue in the tube, being pressed up, as was said, by the air, on the surface of the bason below. The height at which it is known to stand in the tube, is usually about twenty-nine inches, when the air is heavy; but not above twenty-six, when the air is very light. Thus, by this instrument we can, with some exactness, determine the weight of the air; and, of consequence, tell before-hand the changes of the weather. Before fine dry weather, the air is charged with a variety of vapours, which float in it unseen, and render it extremely heavy, so that it presses up the quicksilver; or, in other words, the barometer rises. In moist, rainy weather, the vapours are washed down, or there is not heat sufficient for them to rise, so that the air is then sensibly lighter, and presses up the quicksilver with less force; or, in other words, the barometer is seen to fall. Our constitutions seem also to correspond with the changes of the weather-glass; they are braced, strong, and vigorous, with a large body of air upon them; they are languid, relaxed, and feeble, when the

air is light, and refuses to give our fibres their proper tone.

But although the barometer thus measures the weight of the air with exactness enough for the general purposes of life, yet it is often affected with a thousand irregularities, that no exactness in the instrument can remedy, nor no theory account for. When high winds blow, the quicksilver generally is low: it rises higher in cold weather, than in warm; and is usually higher at morning and evening, than at mid-day: it generally descends lower after rain than it was before it. There are also frequent changes in the air, without any sensible alteration in the barometer.

As the barometer is thus used in predicting the changes of the weather, so it is also serviceable in measuring the heights of mountains, which mathematicians cannot so readily do: for, as the higher we ascend from the surface of the earth, the air becomes lighter, so the quicksilver in the barometer will descend in proportion. It is found to sink at the rate of the tenth part of an inch for every ninety feet we ascend; so that in going up a mountain, if I find the quicksilver fallen an inch, I conclude, that I am got upon an ascent of near nine hundred feet high. In this there has been found some variation; into a de-

tail of which, it is not the business of a natural historian to enter.

In order to determine the elasticity of air, the wind gun has been invented, which is an instrument variously made; but in all upon the principle of compressing a large quantity of air into a tube, in which there is an ivory ball, and then giving the compressed elastic air free power to act, and drive the ball as directed. The ball thus driven, will pierce a thick board: and will be as fatal, at small distances, as if driven with gunpowder. I do not know whether ever the force of this instrument has been assisted by means of heat; certain I am, that this, which could be very easily contrived by means of phosphorus, or any other hot substance applied to the barrel, would give such a force as I doubt whether gunpowder itself could produce.

The air-pump is an instrument contrived to exhaust the air from round a vessel adapted to that purpose, called a receiver. This method of exhausting, is contrived in the simple instrument, by a piston, like that of a syringe, going down into the vessel, and thus pushing out its air; which, by means of a valve, is prevented from returning into the vessel again. But this, like all other complicated instruments, will be better understood by a minute inspection, than

an hour's description: it may suffice here to observe, that by depriving animals, and other substances, of all air, it shews us what the benefits and effects of air are in sustaining life, or promoting vegetation.

The digester is an instrument of still more extraordinary effects than any of the former; and sufficiently discovers the amazing force of air, when its elasticity is augmented by fire. A common tea-kettle, if the spout were closed up, and the lid put firmly down, would serve to become a digester, if strong enough. But the instrument used for this purpose, is a strong metal pot, with a lid to screw close on, so that, when down, no air can get in or return: into this pot, meat and bones are put, with a small quantity of water, and then the lid screwed close: a lighted lamp is put underneath, and, what is very extraordinary, (yet equally true) in six or eight minutes the whole mass, bones and all, are dissolved into a jelly; so great is the force and elasticity of the air contained within, struggling to escape, and breaking in pieces all the substances with which it is mixed. Care, however, must be taken not to heat this instrument too violently; for then, the inclosed air would become irresistible, and burst the whole, with perhaps a fatal explosion.

There are numberless other useful instruments made to depend on the weight, the elasticity, or the fluidity of the air, which do not come within the plan of the present work; the design of which is not to give an account of the inventions that have been made for determining the nature and properties of air, but a mere narrative of its effects. The description of the pump, the forcing pump, the fire engine, the steam engine, the syphon, and an hundred others, belong not to the naturalist, but the experimental philosopher: the one gives an history of Nature, as he finds she presents herself to him; and he draws the obvious picture: the other, pursues her with close investigation, tortures her by experiment to give up her secrets, and measures her latent qualities with laborious precision. Much more, therefore, might be said of the mechanical effects of air, and of the conjectures that have been made respecting the form of its parts; how some have supposed them to resemble little hoops, coil'd up in a spring; others, like fleeces of wool; others, that the parts are endued with a repulsive quality, by which, when squeezed together, they endeavour to fly off, and recede from each other. We might have given the disputes relative to the

height to which this body of air extends above us, and concerning which there is no agreement. We might have enquired how much of the air we breathe is elementary, and not reducible to any other substance; and of what density it would become, if it were supposed to be continued down to the center of the earth. At that place we might, with the help of figures, and a bold imagination, have shewn it twenty thousand times heavier than its bulk of gold. We might also prove it millions of times purer than upon earth, when raised to the surface of the atmosphere. But these speculations do not belong to natural history; and they have hitherto produced no great advantages in that branch of science to which they more properly appertain.

C H A P. XIX.

An Essay towards a Natural History of the Air.

A Late eminent philosopher has considered our atmosphere as one large chymical vessel, in which an infinite number of various operations are constantly performing. In it all the bodies of the earth are continually sending up a part of their substance by evaporation, to mix in this great alembic, and to float a-while in common. Here minerals, from their lowest depths, ascend in noxious, or in warm vapours, to make a part of the general mass; seas, rivers, and subterraneous springs, furnish their copious supplies; plants receive and return their share; and animals, that by living upon, consume this general store, are found to give it back in greater quantities, when they die *. The air, therefore, that we breathe, and upon which we subsist, bears very little resemblance to that pure elementary body which was described in the last chapter; and which is rather a substance that may be conceived, than experienced to exist. Air, such as we find it, is one of the most compounded bodies in all nature. Water may be reduced to

* Boyle, vol. ii. p. 593.

a fluid every way resembling air, by heat; which, by cold, becomes water again. Every thing we see, gives off its parts to the air, and has a little floating atmosphere of its own round it. The rose is encompassed with a sphere of its own odorous particles; while the night-shade infects the air with scents of a more ungrateful nature. The perfume of musk flies off in such abundance, that the quantity remaining, becomes sensibly lighter by the loss. A thousand substances that escape all our senses, we know to be there; the powerful emanations of the load-stone, the effluvia of electricity, the rays of light, and the insinuations of fire. Such are the various substances through which we move, and which we are constantly taking in at every pore, and returning again with imperceptible discharge.

This great solution, or mixture of all earthly bodies, is continually operating upon itself; which, perhaps, may be the cause of its unceasing motion: but it operates still more visibly upon such grosser substances as are exposed to its influence; for scarce any substance is found capable of resisting the corroding qualities of the air. The air, say the chymists, is a chaos, furnished with all kinds of salts and menstruums; and, therefore, it is capable of dissolving all

kinds of bodies. It is well known, that copper and iron are quickly covered, and eaten with rust ; and that in the climates near the equator, no art can keep them clean. In those dreary countries, the instruments, knives and keys, that are kept in the pocket, nevertheless are quickly encrusted ; and the great guns, with every precaution, after some years, become useless. Stones, as being less hard, may be readily supposed to be more easily soluble. The marble of which the noble monuments of Italian antiquity are composed, although in one of the finest climates in the world, nevertheless shew the impressions which have been made upon them by the air. In many places they seem worm-eaten by time ; and, in others, they appear crumbling into dust. Gold alone seems to be exempted from this general state of dissolution ; it is never found to contract rust, though exposed never so long : the reason of this seems to be, that sea-salt, which is the only menstruum capable of acting upon, and dissolving gold, is but very little mixed with the air ; for salt being a very fixed body, and not apt to volatilize, and rise with heat, there is but a small proportion of it in the atmosphere. In the laboratories, and shops, however, where salt is much used, and the air

is impregnated with it, gold is found to rust as well as other metals.

Bodies of a softer nature are obviously destroyed by the air *. Mr. Boyle says, that silks brought to Jamaica, will, if there exposed to the air, rot even while they preserve their colour; but if kept therefrom, they both retain their strength and gloss. The same happens in Brasil, where their cloaths, which are black, soon turn of an iron colour; though, in the shops, they preserve their proper hue †. In these tropical climates also, such are the putrescent qualities of the air, that white sugar will sometimes be full of maggots. Drugs and plaisters lose their virtue, and become verminous. In some places they are obliged to expose their sweetmeats by day in the sun, otherwise the night air would quickly cause them to putrefy. On the contrary, in the cold arctic regions, animal substances, during their winter, are never known to putrefy; and meat may be kept for months, without any salt whatsoever. This experiment happily succeeded with the eight Englishmen that were accidentally left upon the inhospitable coasts of Greenland, at a place where seven Dutchmen had perished but a few years before; for killing some rein-deer for their subsistence,

* Buffon, vol. iii. p. 62.

† Ibid, vol. iii. p. 68.

and having no salt to preserve the flesh, to their great surprize, they soon found it did not want any, as it remained sweet during their eight months continuance upon that shore.

These powers with which air is endued over unorganized substances, are exerted in a still stronger manner over plants, animals of an inferior nature, and, lastly, over man himself. Most of the beauty, and the luxuriance of vegetation, is well known to be derived from the benign influence of the air: and every plant seems to have its favourite climate, not less than its proper soil. The lower ranks of animals also, seem formed for their respective climates, in which only they can live. Man alone seems the child of every climate, and capable of existing in all. However, this peculiar privilege does not exempt him from the influences of the air; he is as much subject to its malignity, as the meanest insect or vegetable.

With regard to plants, air is so absolutely necessary for their life and preservation, that they will not vegetate in an exhausted receiver. All plants have within them a quantity of air, which supports and agitates their juices. They are continually imbibing fresh nutriment from the air, to encrease this store, and to supply the wants which they sustain from evaporation. When,

therefore, the external air is drawn from them, they are no longer able to subsist. Even that quantity of air which they before were possessed of, escapes through their pores, into the exhausted receiver; and as this continues to be pumped away, they become languid, grow flaccid, and die. However, the plant or flower thus ceasing to vegetate, is kept, by being secured from the external air, a much longer time sweet than it would have continued, had it been openly exposed.

That air which is so necessary to the life of vegetables, is still more so to that of animals; there are none found, how seemingly torpid forever, that do not require their needful supply. Fishes themselves will not live in water from whence the air is exhausted; and it is generally supposed that they die in frozen ponds, from the want of this necessary to animal existence. Many have been the animals that idle curiosity has tortured in the prison of a receiver, merely to observe the manner of their dying. We shall, from a thousand instances, produce that of the viper, as it is known to be one of the most vivacious reptiles in the world; and as we shall feel but little compassion for its tortures. Mr. Boyle took a new caught viper, and shutting it up into a small receiver, began to pump away

the air *. “ At first, upon the air’s being drawn away, it began to swell; some time after he had done pumping, it began to gape, and open its jaws; being thus compelled to open its jaws, it once more resumed its former lankness; it then began to move up and down within, as if to seek for air, and after a while foamed a little, leaving the foam sticking to the inside of the glass; soon after the body and neck grew prodigiously tumid, and a blister appeared upon its back; an hour and an half after the receiver was exhausted, the distended viper moved, and gave manifest signs of life; the jaws remained quite distended; as it were from beneath the epiglottis, came the black tongue, and reached beyond it; but the animal seemed, by its posture, not to have any life: the mouth also was grown blackish within; and in this situation it continued for twenty-three hours. But upon the air’s being re-admitted, the viper’s mouth was presently closed, and soon after opened again; and for some time those motions continued, which argued the remains of life.” Such is the fate of the most insignificant or minute reptile that can be thus included. Mites, fleas, and even the little eels that are found swimming in vinegar, die for want of air. Not only these, but the eggs

* Boyle’s Phico. Mechan. Exper. Passim.

of these animals, will not produce in vacuo, but require air to bring them to perfection.

As in this manner air is necessary to their subsistence, so also it must be of a proper kind, and not impregnated with foreign mixtures. That factitious air which is pumped from plants or fluids, is generally, in a short time, fatal to them. Mr. Boyle has given us many experiments to this purpose. After having shewn that all vegetable, and most mineral substances, properly prepared, may afford air, by being placed in an exhausted receiver, and this in such quantities, that some have thought it a new substance, made by the alteration which the mineral or plant has undergone by the texture of its parts being loosened in the operation—having shewn, I say, that this air may be drawn in great quantities from vegetable, animal, or mineral substances, such as apples, cherries, amber burnt, or hartshorn *—he included a frog in artificial air, produced from paste; in seven minutes space it suffered convulsions, and at last lay still, and being taken out, recovered no motion at all, but was dead. A bird enclosed in artificial air, from raisins, died in a quarter of a minute, and never stirred more. A snail was put into the receiver, with air of paste; in four

* Boyle's Physic. Mechan. vol. ii. p. 598.

minutes it ceased to move, and was dead, altho' it had survived in vacuo for several hours: so that factitious air proved a greater enemy to animals than even a vacuum itself.

Air also may be impregnated with fumes that are instantly fatal to animals. The fumes of hot iron, copper, or any other heated metal, blown into the place where an animal is confined, instantly destroy it. We have already mentioned the vapours in the grotto Del Cane suffocating a dog. The ancients even supposed, that these animals, as they always ran with their noses to the ground, were the first that felt any infection. In short, it should seem that the predominance of any one vapour, from any body, how wholesome soever in itself, becomes infectious; and that we owe the salubrity of the air to the variety of its mixture.

But there is no animal whose frame is more sensibly affected by the changes of the air than man. It is true, he can endure a greater variety of climates than the lower orders generally are able to do; but it is rather by the means which he has discovered of obviating their effects, than by the apparent strength of his constitution. Most other animals can bear cold or hunger better, endure greater fatigues in proportion, and are satisfied with shorter repose.

The variations of the climate, therefore, would probably affect them less, if they had the same means or skill in providing against the severities of the change. However this be, the body of man is an instrument much more nicely sensible of the variations of the air, than any of those which his own art has produced ; for his frame alone seems to unite all their properties, being invigorated by the weight of the air, relaxed by its moisture, enfeebled by its heat, and stiffened by its frigidity.

But it is chiefly by the predominance of some peculiar vapour, that the air becomes unfit for human support. It is often found, by dreadful experience, to enter into the constitution, to mix with its juices, and to putrefy the whole mass of blood. The nervous system is not less affected by its operations ; palsies and vertigoes are caused by its damps ; and a still more fatal train of distempers by its exhalations. In order that the air should be wholesome, it is necessary, as we have seen, that it should not be of one kind, but the compound of several substances ; and the more various the composition, to all appearance the more salubrious. A man, therefore, who continues in one place, is not so likely to enjoy this wholesome variety, as he who changes his situation ; and, if I may so express it, instead

of waiting for a renovation of air, walks forward to meet its arrival. Thus mere motion, independent even of the benefits of exercise, becomes wholesome, by thus supplying a greater variety of that healthful fluid by which we are sustained.

A thousand accidents are found to encrease these bodies of vapour, that make one place more or less wholesome than another. Heat may raise them in too great quantities; and cold may stagnate them. Minerals may give off their effluvia in such proportion as to keep away all other kind of air; vegetables may render the air unwholesome by their supply; and animal putrefaction seems to furnish a quantity of vapour, at least as noxious as any of the former. All these united, generally make up the mass of respiration, and are, when mixed together, harmless; but any one of them, for a long time singly predominant, becomes at length fatal.

The effects of heat in producing a noxious quality in the air, are well known. Those torrid regions under the Line are always unwholesome. At Senegal, I am told, the natives consider forty as a very advanced time of life, and generally die of old age at fifty. At Carthage^{*}, in America, where the heat of the hottest day ever

* Ullea, vol. i. p. 42.

known in Europe is continual, where, during their winter season, these dreadful heats are united with a continual succession of thunder, rain, and tempests, arising from their intenseness, the wan and livid complexions of the inhabitants might make strangers suspect that they were just recovered from some dreadful distemper; the actions of the natives are conformable to their colour; in all their motions there is somewhat relaxed and languid; the heat of the climate even affects their speech, which is soft and slow, and their words generally broken. Travellers from Europe retain their strength and ruddy colour in that climate, possibly for three or four months; but afterwards suffer such decays in both, that they are no longer to be distinguished from the inhabitants by their complexion. However, this languid and spiritless existence is frequently drawled on sometimes even to eighty. Young persons are generally most affected by the heat of climate, which spares the more aged; but all, upon their arrival on the coasts, are subject to the same train of fatal disorders. Few nations have experienced the mortality of these coasts, so much as our own: in our unsuccessful attack upon Carthage, more than three parts of our army were destroyed by the climate alone; and those that returned from

that fatal expedition, found their former vigour irretrievably gone. In our more fortunate expedition, which gave us the Havannah, we had little reason to boast of our success; instead of a third, not a fifth part of the army were left survivors of their victory, the climate being an enemy that even heroes cannot conquer.

The distempers that thus proceed from the cruel malignity of those climates, are many: that, for instance, called the Chapotonadas, carries off a multitude of people; and extremely thins the crews of European ships, whom gain tempts into those inhospitable regions. The nature of this distemper is but little known, being caused in some persons by cold, in others by indigestion. But its effects are far from being obscure; it is generally fatal in three or four days: upon its seizing the patient, it brings on what is there called the black vomit, which is the sad symptom after which none are ever found to recover. Some, when the vomit attacks them, are seized with a delirium, that, were they not tied down, they would tear themselves to pieces, and thus expire in the midst of this furious paroxysm. This disorder, in milder climates, takes the name of the bilious fever, and is attended with milder symptoms, but very dangerous in all.

There are many other disorders incident to the human body, that seem the offspring of heat; but to mention no other, that very lassitude which prevails in all the tropical climates, may be considered as a disease. The inhabitants of India *, says a modern philosopher, sustain an unceasing languor, from the heats of their climate; and are torpid in the midst of profusion. For this reason, the great Disposer of Nature has clothed their country with trees of an amazing height, whose shade might defend them from the beams of the sun; and whose continual freshness might, in some measure, temperate their fierceness. From these shades, therefore, the air receives refreshing moisture, and animals a cooling protection. The whole race of savage animals retire, in the midst of the day, to the very center of the forests, not so much to avoid their enemy man, as to find a defence against the raging heats of the season. This advantage which arises from shade in torrid climates, may probably afford a solution for that extraordinary circumstance related by Boyle, which he imputes to a different cause. In the island of Ternate, belonging to the Dutch, a place that had been long celebrated for its beauty and healthfulness, the clove trees grew in such plenty, that they in

* *Linnaei Amoenitates*, vol. v. p. 444.

some measure lessened their own value: for this reason, the Dutch resolved to cut down the forests, and thus to raise the price of the commodity: but they had soon reason to repent of their avarice; for such a change ensued, by cutting down the trees, that the whole island, from being healthy and delightful, having lost its charming shades, became extremely sickly, and has actually continued so to this day. Boerhaave considered heat so prejudicial to health, that he was never seen to go near a fire.

An opposite set of calamities are the consequence, in climates where the air is condensed by cold. In such places, all that train of distempers which are known to arise from obstructed perspiration, are very common*; eruptions, boils, scurvy, and a loathsome leprosy, that covers the whole body with a scurf, and white putrid ulcers. These disorders also, are infectious; and, while they thus banish the patient from society, they generally accompany him to the grave. The men of those climates seldom attain to the age of fifty; but the women, who do not lead such laborious lives, are found to live longer.

The autumnal complaints which attend a wet

* Krantz's History of Greenland, vol. i. p. 235.

summer, indicate the dangers of a moist air. The long continuance of an east wind also, shews the prejudice of a dry one. Mineral exhalations, when copious, are every where known to be fatal; and although we probably owe the encrease and luxuriance of vegetation to a moderate degree of their warmth, yet the natives of those countries where there are mines in plenty, but too often experience the noxious effects of their vicinity. Those trades also that deal in the preparations of metals of all kinds, are always unwholesome; and the workmen, after some time, are generally seen to labour under palsies, and other nervous complaints. The vapours from some vegetable substances, are well known to be attended with dangerous effects. The shade of the machinel tree, in America, is said to be fatal; as was that of the juniper, if we may credit the ancients. Those who walk through fields of poppies, or in any manner prepare those flowers for making opium, are very sensibly affected with the drowsiness they occasion. A physician of Mr. Boyle's acquaintance, causing a large quantity of black hellebore to be pounded in a mortar, most of the persons who were in the room, and especially the person who pounded it, were purged by it, and some of them strongly. He also gathered a certain plant in Ireland, which the person who beat in a mortar, and the

physician who was standing near, were so strongly affected by, that their hands and faces swelled to an enormous size, and continued tumid for a long time after.

But neither mineral nor vegetable steams are so dangerous to the constitution, as those proceeding from animal substances, putrefying either by disease or death. The effluvia that comes from diseased bodies, propagate that frightful catalogue of disorders which are called infectious. The parts which compose vegetable vapours, and mineral exhalations, seem gross and heavy, in comparison of these volatile vapours, that go to great distances, and have been described as spreading desolation over the whole earth. They fly every where; penetrate every where; and the vapours that fly from a single disease, soon render it epidemic.

The plague is the first upon the list in this class of human calamities. From whence this scourge of man's presumption may have its beginning, is not well known; but we well know that it is propagated by infection. Whatever be the general state of the atmosphere, we learn, from experience, that the noxious vapours, though but singly introduced at first, taints the air by degrees: every person infected, tends to add to the growing malignity;

and, as the disorder becomes more general, the putrescence of the air becomes more noxious, so that the symptoms are aggravated by continuance. When it is said that the origin of this disorder is unknown, it implies, that the air seems to be but little employed in first producing it. There are some countries, even in the midst of Africa, that we learn have never been infected with it; but continue, for centuries, unmolested. On the contrary, there are others, that are generally visited once a year, as in Egypt, which, nevertheless, seems peculiarly blessed with the serenity and temperature of its climate. In the former countries, which are of vast extent, and many of them very populous, every thing should seem to dispose the air to make the plague continual among them. The great heats of the climate, the unwholsomeness of the food, the sloth and dirt of the inhabitants, but, above all, the bloody battles which are continually fought among them, after which heaps of dead bodies are left unburied, and exposed to putrefaction. All these one might think would be apt to bring the plague among them; and yet, nevertheless, we are assured by Leo Africanus, that in Numidia the plague is not known once in an hundred years; and that in Negroland, it is not known at all. This dreadful disorder, therefore, must have its rise, not

from any previous disposition of the air, but from some particular cause, beginning with one individual, and extending the malignity, by communication, till at last the air becomes actually tainted by the generality of the infection.

The plague which spread itself over the whole world, in the year 1346, as we are told by Mezeray, was so contagious, that scarce a village, or even an house, escaped being infected by it. Before it had reached Europe, it had been for two years travelling from the great kingdom of Cathay, where it began by a vapour most horribly fetid; this broke out of the earth like a subterranean fire, and upon the first instant of its eruption, consumed and desolated above two hundred leagues of that country, even to the trees and stones.

In that great plague which desolated the city of London, in the year 1665, a pious and learned schoolmaster of Mr. Boyle's acquaintance, who ventured to stay in the city, and took upon him the humane office of visiting the sick and the dying, who had been deserted by better physicians, averred, that being once called to a poor woman who had buried her children of the plague, he found the room where she lay so little that it scarce could hold any more than the bed whereon she was stretched. However, in this

wretched abode, beside her, in an open coffin, her husband lay, who had some time before died of the same disease; and whom she, poor creature, soon followed. But what shewed the peculiar malignity of the air thus suffering from animal putrefaction, was, that the contagious steams had produced spots on the very wall of their wretched apartment: and Mr. Boyle's own study, which was contiguous to a pest-house, was also spotted in the same frightful manner. Happily for mankind, this disorder, for more than a century, has not been known in our island; and, for this last age, has abated much of its violence, even in those countries where it is most common. Diseases, like empires, have their revolutions; and those which for a while were the scourge of mankind, sink unheard of, to give place to new ones, more dreadful, as being less understood.

For this revolution in disorders, which has employed the speculation of many, Mr. Boyle accounts in the following manner. "Since," says he, "there want not causes in the bowels of the earth, to make considerable changes amongst the materials that nature has plentifully treasured up in those magazines, and as those noxious steams are abundantly supplied to the surface, it may not seem improbable, that in this

great variety, some may be found capable of particularly affecting the human frame in a particular manner, and thus of producing new diseases. The duration of these may be greater or less, according to the lastingness of those subterraneous causes that produced them. On which account, it need be no wonder that some diseases have but a short duration, and vanish not long after they appear; whilst others may continue longer, as having under ground more settled and durable causes to maintain them."

From the recital of this train of mischiefs produced by the air, upon minerals, plants, animals, and man himself, a gloomy mind may be apt to dread this indulgent nurse of nature as a cruel and an inexorable step-mother: but it is far otherwise; and, although we are sometimes injured, yet almost all the comforts and blessings of life spring from its propitious influence. It would be needless to observe, that it is absolutely necessary for the support of our lives; for of this, every moment's experience assures us. But how it contributes to this support, is not so readily comprehended. All allow it to be a friend, to whose benefits we are constantly obliged: and yet, to this hour, philosophers are divided as to the nature of the obligation. The dispute is, whether the air is only useful by its weight to

force our juices into circulation*; or, whether, by containing a peculiar spirit, it mixes with the blood in our vessels, and acts like a spur to their industry†. Perhaps it may exert both these useful offices at the same time. Its weight may give the blood its progressive motion, through the larger vessels of the body; and its admixture with it, cause those contractions of all the vessels, which serve to force it still more strongly forward, through the minutest channels of the circulation. Be this as it may, it is well known, that that part of our blood which has just received the influx of the air in our bodies, is of a very different colour from that which has almost performed its circuit. It has been found, that the arterial blood which has been immediately mixed with the air in the lungs, and, if I may so express it, is just beginning its journey through the body, is of a fine florid scarlet colour; while, on the contrary, the blood of the veins that is returning from having performed its duty, is of a blackish crimson hue. Whence this difference of colour should proceed, is not well understood; we only know the fact, that this florid colour is communicated by the air; and we are well con-

* Keil. Robinson.

† Whytt upon vital and involuntary Motions.

vinced, that this air has been admitted into the blood for very useful purposes.

Besides this vital principle in animals, the air also gives life and body to flame. A candle quickly goes out in an exhausted receiver; for having soon consumed the quantity of air, it then expires, for want of a fresh supply. There has been a flame contrived that will burn under water; but none yet has been found, that will continue to burn without air. Gunpowder, which is the most catching and powerful fire we know, will not go off in an exhausted receiver; nay, if a train of gunpowder be laid, so as that one part may be fired in the open air, yet the other part in vacuo will remain untouched, and unconsumed. Wood also set on fire, immediately goes out; and its flame ceases upon removing the air; for something is then wanting to press the body of the fire against that of the fuel, and to prevent the too speedy diffusion of the flame. We frequently see cooks, and others, whose business it is to keep up strong fires, take proper precautions to exclude the beams of the sun from shining upon them, which effectually puts them out. This they are apt to ascribe to a wrong cause; namely, the operation of the light: but the real fact is, that

the warmth of the sun-beams lessen and dissipate the body of the air that goes to feed the flame; and the fire, of consequence, languishes for want of a necessary supply.

The air, while it thus kindles fire into flame, is notwithstanding found to moderate the rays of light, to dissipate their violence, and to spread an uniform lustre over every object. Were the beams of the sun to dart directly upon us, without passing through this protecting medium, they would either burn us up at once, or blind us with their effulgence. But by going through the air, they are reflected, refracted, and turned from their direct course, a thousand different ways; and thus are more evenly diffused over the face of nature.

Among the other necessary benefits the air is of to us, one of the principal is its conveyance of sound. Even the vibrations of a bell, which have the loudest effect that we know of, ceases to be heard, when under the receiver of an air-pump. Thus all the pleasures we receive from conversation with each other, or from music, depend entirely upon the air.

Odours likewise are diffused only by the means of air; without this fluid to swim in, they would for ever remain torpid in their respective

substances; and the rose would affect us with as little sensations of pleasure, as the thorn on which it grew.

Those who are willing to augment the catalogue of the benefits we receive from this element, assert also, that tastes themselves would be insipid, were it not that the air presses their parts upon the nerves of the tongue and palate, so as to produce their grateful effects. Thus, continue they, upon the tops of high mountains, as on the Pike of Teneriff, the most poignant bodies, as pepper, ginger, salt, and spice, have no sensible taste, for want of their particles being thus sent home to the sensory. But, we owe the air sufficient obligations, not to be studious of admitting this among the number: in fact, all substances have their tastes, as well on the tops of mountains, as in the bottom of the valley; and I have been one of many, who have ate a very savoury dinner on the Alps.

It is sufficient, therefore, that we regard the air as the parent of health and vegetation; as a kind dispenser of light and warmth; and as the conveyer of sounds and odours. This is an element of which avarice will not deprive us; and which power cannot monopolize. The treasures of the earth, the verdure of the fields,

and even the refreshments of the stream, are too often seen going only to assist the luxuries of the great; while the less fortunate part of mankind stand humble spectators of their encroachments. But the air no limitations can bound, nor any land-marks restrain. In this benign element, all mankind can boast an equal possession; and for this we all have equal obligations to Heaven. We consume a part of it, for our own sustenance, while we live; and, when we die, our putrefying bodies give back the supply, which, during life, we had accumulated from the general mass.

C H A P. XX.

Of Winds, irregular and regular.

WIND is a current of air. Experimental philosophers produce an artificial wind, by an instrument called an aeolipile. This is nothing more than an hollow copper ball, with a long pipe; a tea-kettle might be readily made into one, if it were entirely closed at the lid, and the spout left open; through this spout it is to be filled with water, and then set upon the fire, by which means it produces a violent blast, like wind, which continues while there is any water remaining in the instrument. In this manner water is converted into a rushing air; which, if caught as it goes out, and left to cool, is again quickly converted into its former element. Besides this, as was mentioned in the former chapter, almost every substance contains some portions of air. Vegetables, or the bodies of animals left to putrefy, produce it in a very copious manner. But it is not only seen thus escaping from bodies, but it may be very easily made to enter into them. A quantity of air may be compressed into water, so as to be intimately blended with it. It finds a much easier admission into wine, or any fermented

liquor; and an easier still, into spirits of wine. Some salts suck up the air in such quantities, that they are made sensibly heavier thereby, and often are melted by its moisture. In this manner, most bodies, being found either capable of receiving or affording it, we are not to be surprized at those streams of air that are continually fleeting round the globe. Minerals, vegetables, and animals, contribute to encrease the current; and are sending off their constant supplies. These, as they are differently affected by cold or heat, by mixture or putrefaction, all yield different quantities of air at different times; and the loudest tempests, and most rapid whirlwinds, are formed from their united contributions.

The sun is the principal instrument in rarefying the juices of plants, so as to give an escape to their imprisoned air; it is also equally operative in promoting the putrefaction of animals. Mineral exhalations are more frequently raised by subterranean heat. The moon, the other planets, the seasons, are all combined in producing these effects in a smaller degree. Mountains give a direction to the courses of the air. Fires carry a current of air along their body. Night and day alternately chill and warm the earth, and produce an alternate current of its vapours. These, and an hundred other causes, may be

assigned for the variety, and the activity of the winds, their continual change, and uncertain duration.

With us on land, therefore, as the wind proceeds from so many causes, and meets such a variety of obstacles, there can be but little hopes of ever bringing its motions to conform to theory; or of foretelling how it may blow a minute to come. The great Bacon, indeed, was of opinion, that by a close and regular history of the winds, continued for a number of ages together, and the particulars of each observation reduced to general maxims, we might at last come to understand the variations of this capricious element; and that we could foretell the certainty of a wind, with as much ease as we now foretell the return of an eclipse. Indeed, his own beginnings in this arduous undertaking, seem to speak the possibility of its success; but, unhappily for mankind, this investigation is the work of ages, and we want a Bacon to direct the process.

To be able, therefore, with any plausibility, to account for the variations of the wind upon land, is not to be at present expected; and to understand any thing of their nature, we must have recourse to those places where they are more permanent and steady. This uniformity

and steadiness we are chiefly to expect upon the ocean. There, where there is no variety of substances to furnish the air with various and inconstant supplies, where there are no mountains to direct the course of its current, but where all is extensively uniform and even; in such a place, the wind arising from a simple cause, must have but one simple motion. In fact, we find it so. There are many parts of the world where the winds, that with us are so uncertain, pay their stated visits. In some places, they are found to blow one way by day, and another by night; in others, for one half of the year, they go in a direction contrary to their former course: but what is more extraordinary still, there are some places where the winds never change, but for ever blow the same way. This is particularly found to obtain between the tropics in the Atlantic and Æthiopic oceans; as well as in the great Pacific sea.

Few things surely can appear more extraordinary to a person who has never been out of our variable latitudes, than this steady wind, that for ever sits in the sail, sending the vessel forward; and as effectually preventing its return. He who has been taught to consider that nothing in the world is so variable as the winds, must certainly be surprized to find a place where

there is nothing more uniform. With us their inconstancy has become a proverb; with the natives of those distant climates, they may talk of a friend or a mistress as fixed and unchangeable as the winds, and mean a compliment by the comparison. When our ships are once arrived into the proper latitudes of the great Pacific ocean, the mariner forgets the helm, and his skill becomes almost useless: neither storms nor tempests are known to deform the glassy bosom of that immense sheet of waters; a gentle breeze, that for ever blows in the same direction, rests upon the canvas, and speeds the navigator. In the space of six weeks, ships are thus known to cross an immense ocean, that takes more than so many months to return. Upon returning, the trade-wind, which has been propitious, is then avoided; the mariner is generally obliged to steer into the northern latitudes, and to take the advantage of every casual wind that offers, to assist him into port. This wind, which blows with such constancy one way, is known to prevail not only in the Pacific ocean, but also in the Atlantic, between the coasts of Guinea and Brazil; and, likewise, in the Æthiopic ocean. This seems to be the great universal wind, blowing from the east to the

west, that prevails in all the extensive oceans, where the land does not frequently break the general current. Were the whole surface of the globe an ocean, there would probably be but this one wind, for ever blowing from the east, and pursuing the motions of the sun westward. All the other winds seem subordinate to this; and many of them are made from the deviations of its current. To form, therefore, any conception relative to the variations of the wind in general, it is fittest to begin with that which never varies.

There have been many theories to explain this invariable motion of the winds; among the rest, we cannot omit that of Doctor Lyfter, for its strangeness. "The sea," says he, "in those latitudes, is generally covered over with green weeds, for a great extent; and the air produced from the vegetable perspiration of these, produces the trade-wind." The theory of Cartesius was not quite so absurd. He alledged, that the earth went round faster than its atmosphere at the equator; so that its motion, from west to east, gave the atmosphere an imaginary one from east to west; and thus an east-wind was eternally seen to prevail. Rejecting those arbitrary opinions, conceived without force, and asserted without proof, Doctor Halley has given

one more plausible; which seems to be the reigning system of the day.

To conceive his opinion clearly, let us for a moment suppose the whole surface of the earth to be an ocean, and the air encompassing it on every side, without motion. Now it is evident, that that part of the air that lies directly under the beams of the sun, will be rarefied; and if the sun remained for ever in the same place, there would be a great vacuity in the air, if I may so express it, beneath the place where the sun stood. But the sun moving forward, from east to west, this vacuity will follow too, and still be made under it. But while it goes on to make new vacuities, the air will rush in to fill up those the sun has already made; in other words, as it is still travelling forward, the air will continually be rushing in behind, and pursue its motions from east to west. In this manner, the air is put into motion by day; and by night, the parts continue to impel each other, till the next return of the sun, that gives a new force to the circulation.

In this manner is explained the constant east-wind that is found blowing round the globe, near the equator. But it is also known, that as we recede from the equator on either side, we come into a trade-wind, that continually blows

from the poles, from the north on one side, or the south on the other, both directing towards the equator. This also proceeds from a similar cause with the former; for the air being more rarefied in those places over which the sun more directly darts its rays, the currents will come both from the north and the south, to fill up the intermediate vacuity.

These two motions, namely, the general one from east to west, and the more particular one from both the Poles, will account for all the phenomena of trade-winds; which, if the whole surface of the globe were sea, would undoubtedly be constant, and for ever continue to blow in one direction. But there are a thousand circumstances to break these air-currents into smaller ones; to drive them back against their general course; to raise or depress them; to condense them into storms; or to whirl them in eddies. In consequence of this, regard must be often had to the nature of the soil, the position of the high mountains, the course of the rivers, and even to the luxuriance of vegetation.

If a country lying directly under the sun, be very flat and sandy, and if the land be low and extensive, the heats occasioned by the reflection of the sun-beams, produces a very great rarefaction of the air. The desarts of Africa, which

are conformable to this description, are scarce ever fanned by a breath of wind by day; but the burning sun is continually seen blazing in intolerable splendor above them. For this reason, all along the coasts of Guinea, the wind is always perceived blowing in upon land, in order to fill up the vacuity caused by the sun's operation. In those shores, therefore, the wind blows in a contrary direction to that of its general current; and is constantly found setting in from the west.

From the same cause it happens, that those constant calms, attended with deluges of rain, are found in the same part of the ocean. For this tract being placed in the middle, between the westerly winds blowing on the coast of Guinea, and the easterly trade-winds that move at some distance from shore, in a contrary direction, the tendency of that part of the air that lies between these two opposite currents, is indifferent to either, and so rests between both in torpid serenity; and the weight of the incumbent atmosphere, being diminished by the continual contrary winds blowing from hence, it is unable to keep the vapours suspended that are copiously borne thither; so that they fall in continual rains.

But it is not to be supposed, that any theory

can account for all the phænomena of even those winds that are known to be most regular. Instead, therefore, of a complete system of the trade-winds, we must rather be content with an imperfect history. These *, as was said, being the result of a combination of effects, assume as great a variety as the causes producing them are various.

Besides the great general wind abovementioned, in those parts of the Atlantic that lie under the temperate zone, a north wind prevails constantly during the months of October, November, December, and January. These, therefore, are the most favourable months for embarking for the East-Indies, in order to take the benefit of these winds, for crossing the line: and it has been often found, by experience, that those who had set sail five months before, were not in the least farther advanced in their voyage, than those who waited for the favourable wind. During the winter of Nova Zembla, and the other arctic countries, a north wind reigns almost continually. In the Cape de Verde islands, a south wind prevails during the month of July. At the Cape of Good Hope, a north-west wind blows during the month of September. There are also regular winds, produced by various causes, upon land. The ancient Greeks were the

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 230.

first who observed a constant breeze, produced by the melting of the snows, in some high neighbouring countries. This was perceived in Greece, Thrace, Macedonia, and the Ægean sea. The same kind of winds are now remarked in the kingdom of Congo, and the most southern parts of Africa. The flux and reflux of the sea also produces some regular winds, that serve the purposes of trade; and, in general, it may be observed, that wherever there is a strong current of water, there is a current of air that seems to attend it.

Beside these winds that are found to blow in one direction, there are, as was said before, others that blow for certain months of the year one way, and the rest of the year the contrary way: these are called the Monsoons, from a famous pilot of that name, who first used them in navigation with success*. In all that part of the ocean that lies between Africa and India, the east winds begin at the month of January, and continue till about the commencement of June. In the month of August, or September, the contrary direction takes place; and the west winds prevail for three or four months. The interval between these winds, that is to say, from the end of June to the beginning of

* Varenii Geographia Geurculis, cap. 20.

August, there is no fixed wind; but the sea is usually tossed by violent tempests, proceeding from the north. These winds are always subject to their greatest variations, as they approach the land; so that on one side of the great peninsula of India, the coasts are, for near half the year, harrassed by violent hurricanes, and northern tempests; while, on the opposite side, and all along the coasts of Coromandel, these dreadful tempests are wholly unknown. At Java, and Ceylon, a west wind begins to reign in the month of September; but at fifteen days of south latitude, this wind is found to be lost, and the great general trade-wind from the east, is perceived to prevail. On the contrary, at Cochin, in China, the west wind begins at March; so that these Monsoons prevail, at different seasons, throughout the Indies. So that the mariner takes one part of the year to go from Java to the Moluccas; another from Cochin to Molucca; another from Molucca to China; and still another to direct him from China to Japan.

There are winds also that may be considered as peculiar to certain coasts; for example, the south wind is almost constant upon the coasts of Chili and Peru; western winds almost constantly prevail on the coast of Terra Magellanica; and

in the environs of the Streights le Maire. On the coasts of Malabar, north and north-west winds prevail continually; along the coast of Guinea, the north-west wind is also very frequent; and, at a distance from the coasts, the north-east is always found prevailing. From the beginning of November to the end of December, a west wind prevails on the coasts of Japan; and, during the whole winter, no ships can leave the port of Cochin, on account of the impetuosity of the winds that set upon the coast. These blow with such vehemence that the ports are entirely choaked up with sand, and even boats themselves are not able to enter. However, the east winds that prevail for the other half of the year, clear the mouths of their harbours from the accumulations of the preceding winter, and set the confined ships at liberty. At the Streights of Babelmandel there is a south wind that periodically returns, and which is always followed by a north-east.

Beside winds thus peculiar to certain coasts, there are others found to prevail on all the coasts, in warm climates; which, during one part of the day, blow from the shore, and, during another part of it, blow from the sea. The sea-breeze, in those countries, as Dampier

observes, commonly rises in the morning, about nine, proceeding slowly, in a fine small black curl, upon the surface of the water, and making its way to refresh the shore. It is gentle at first, but encreases gradually till twelve, then insensibly sinks away, and is totally hushed at five. Upon its ceasing, the land-breeze begins to take its turn, which increases till twelve at night, and is succeeded, in the morning, by the sea-breeze again. Without all doubt, nothing could have been more fortunate, for the inhabitants of the warm countries, where those breezes blow, than this alternate refreshment, which they feel at those seasons when it is most wanted. The heat, on some coasts, would be insupportable, were it not for such a supply of air, when the sun has rarefied all that which lay more immediately under the coast. The sea-breeze temperates the heat of the sun by day; and the land-breeze corrects the malignity of the dews, and vapours, by night. Where these breezes, therefore, prevail, and they are very common, the inhabitants enjoy a share of health, and happiness, unknown to those that live much farther up the country, or such as live in similar latitudes without this advantage. The cause of these obviously seems to arise from the rarefaction of

the air by the sun, as their duration continues with its appearance, and alters when it goes down. The sun, it is observed, equally diffusing his beams upon land and sea, the land, being a more solid body than the water, receives a greater quantity of heat, and reflects it more strongly. Being thus, therefore, heated to a greater degree than the waters, it, of consequence, drives the air from land out to sea; but, its influence being removed, the air returns to fill up the former vacuity. Such is the usual method of accounting for this phenomena; but, unfortunately, these sea and land breezes are visitants that come at all hours. On the coasts of Malabar*, the land-breezes begin at midnight, and continue till noon; then the sea-breezes take their turn, and continue till midnight again. While, again, at Congo, the land-breezes begin at five, and continue till nine the next day.

But, if the cause of these be so inscrutable, that are, as we see, tolerably regular in their visitations, what shall we say to the winds of our own climate, that are continually shifting, and incapable of rest? Some general causes may be assigned, which nothing but particular experience can apply. And, in the first place, it

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 252.

may be observed, that clouds, and heat, and, in short, whatever either encreases the density or the elasticity of the air, in any one place, will produce a wind there: for the encreased activity of the air thus pressing more powerfully on the parts of it that are adjacent, will drive them forward, and thus go on, in a current, till the whole comes to an equality.

In this manner, as a denser air produces a wind, on the one hand; so will any accident, that contributes to lighten the air, produce it on the other: for, a lighter air may be considered as a vacuity, into which the neighbouring air will rush: and hence it happens, that when the barometer marks a peculiar lightness in the air, it is no wonder that it foretells a storm.

The winds upon large waters are generally more regular than those upon land. The wind at sea generally blows with an even steady gale; the wind at land puffs by intervals, encreasing its strength, and remitting it, without any apparent cause. This, in a great measure, may be owing to the many mountains, towers, or trees, that it meets in its way, all contributing either to turn it from its course, or interrupt its passage.

The east wind blows more constantly than any other, and for an obvious reason: all other winds are, in some measure, deviations from it, and partly may owe their origin thereto. It is generally, likewise, the most powerful, and for the same reason.

There are often double currents of the air. While the wind blows one way, we frequently see the clouds move another. This is almost ever the case before thunder; for it is well known that the thunder cloud always moves against the wind: the cause of this surprizing appearance has hitherto remained a secret. From hence we may conclude, that weathercocks only inform us of that current of the air, which is near the surface of the earth; but are often erroneous with regard to the upper regions; and, in fact, Derham has often found them erroneous.

Winds are generally more powerful on elevated situations than on the plain, because their progress is interrupted by fewer obstacles. In proportion as we ascend the heights of a mountain, the violence of the weather seems to encrease, until we have got above the region of storms, where all is usually calm and serene. Sometimes, however, the storms rise even to the tops of the highest mountains; as we learn from those who have been on the Andes, and

as we are convinced by the deep snows that crown even the highest.

Winds blowing from the sea are generally moister, and more attended with rains, than those which blow over extensive tracts of land: for the sea gives off more vapours to the air, and these are rolled forward upon land, by the winds blowing from thence*. For this reason our easterly winds, that blow from the continent, are dry, in comparison of those that blow from the surface of the ocean, with which we are surrounded on every other quarter.

In general the winds are more boisterous in spring and autumn, than at other seasons: for, that being the time of high tides, the sea may communicate a part of its motions to the winds. The sun, and moon, also, which then have a greater effect upon the waters, may also have some influence upon the winds; for, there being a great body of air surrounding the globe, which, if condensed into water, would cover it to the depth of thirty-two feet, it is evident that the sun and moon will, to a proportionable degree, affect the atmosphere, and make a tide of air. This tide will be scarce perceivable, indeed; but, without doubt, it actually exists; and may contribute to encrease the

* Derham's Physico Theol.

vernal and autumnal storms, which are then known to prevail.

Upon narrowing the passage through which the air is driven, both the density and the swiftness of the wind is encreased. For as currents of water flow with greater force and rapidity by narrowing their channels, so also will a current of air, driven through a contracted space, grow more violent and irresistible. Hence we find those dreadful storms that prevail in the defiles of mountains, where the wind, pushing from behind through a narrow channel, at once encreases in speed and density, levelling, or tearing up, every obstacle that rises to obstruct its passage.

Winds reflected from the sides of mountains and towers, are often found to be more forceful than those in direct progression. This we frequently perceive near lofty buildings, such as churches or steeples, where winds are generally known to prevail, and that much more powerful than at some distance. The air, in this case, by striking against the side of the building, acquires additional density and, therefore, blows with more force.

These differing degrees of density, which the air is found to possess, sufficiently shew that the force of the winds do not depend upon their velo-

city alone; so that those instruments called *anemometers*, which are made to measure the velocity of the wind, will by no means give us certain information of the force of the storm. In order to estimate this with exactness we ought to know its density; which also these are not calculated to discover. For this reason we often see storms, with very powerful effects, that do not seem to shew any great speed; and, on the contrary, we see these wind measurers go round, with great swiftness, when scarce any damage has followed from the storm.

Such is the nature, and the inconstancy, of the irregular winds with which we are best acquainted. But their effects are much more formidable in those climates, near the tropics, where they are often found to break in upon the steady course of the trade-winds, and to mark their passage with destruction. With us the tempest is but rarely known, and its ravages are registered as an uncommon calamity; but, in the countries that lie between the tropics, and for a good space beyond them, its visits are frequent, and its effects anticipated. In these regions the winds vary their terrors; sometimes involving all things in a suffocating heat; sometimes mixing all the elements of fire, air, earth, and water together; sometimes, with a momentary swiftness, passing over the face

of the country, and destroying all things in their passage; and sometimes raising whole sandy deserts in one country, to deposit them upon some other. We have little reason, therefore, to envy these climates, the luxuriance of their soil, or the brightness of their skies. Our own muddy atmosphere, that wraps us round in obscurity, though it fails to gild our prospects with sun-shine, or our groves with fruitage, nevertheless answers the calls of industry. They may boast of a plentiful, but precarious harvest; while, with us, the labourer toils in a certain expectation of a moderate, but an happy return.

In Egypt *, a kingdom so noted for its fertility, and the brightness of its atmosphere, during summer, the south winds are so hot, that they almost stop respiration; besides which, they are charged with such quantities of sand, that they sometimes darken the air, as with a thick cloud. These sands are so fine, and driven with such violence, that they penetrate every where; even into chests, be they shut never so closely. If these winds happen to continue for any length of time, they produce epidemic diseases; and are often followed by a great mortality. It is also found to rain but very seldom in that country; however, the want of showers

* Buffon, vol. ii. p. 258

is richly compensated by the copiousness of their dews, which greatly tend to promote vegetation.

In Persia, the winter begins in November, and continues till March. The cold at that time is intense enough to congeal the water; and snow falls, in abundance, upon their mountains. During the months of March and April, winds arise, that blow with great force, and seem to usher in the heats of summer. These return again, in autumn, with some violence; without, however, producing any dreadful effects. But, during their summer, all along the coasts of the Persian Gulph, a very dangerous wind prevails, which the natives call the Sameyel, still more dreadful and burning than that of Egypt, and attended with instant and fatal effects. This terrible blast, which was, perhaps, the pestilence of the ancients, instantly kills all those that it involves in its passage. What its malignity consists in, none can tell, as none have ever survived its effects, to give information. It frequently, as I am told, assumes a visible form; and darts, in a kind of bluish vapour, along the surface of the country. The natives, not only of Persia, but Arabia, talk of its effects with terror; and their poets have not failed to heighten them, with the assistance of imagination. They have described it as un-

der the conduct of a minister of vengeance, who governs its terrors, and raises, or depresses it, as he thinks proper *. These deadly winds are also known along the coasts of India, at Necapatan, Masulipatan, and Petapoli. But, luckily for mankind, the shortness of their duration diminishes the injuries that might ensue from their malignity.

The Cape of Good Hope, as well as many islands in the West-Indies, are famous for their hurricanes, and that extraordinary kind of cloud which is said to produce them. This cloud, which is the fore-runner of an approaching hurricane, appears, when first seen, like a small black spot, on the verge of the horizon; and is called, by sailors, the bull's eye, from being seen so minute at a vast distance. All this time, a perfect calm reigns over the sea and land, while the cloud grows gradually broader as it approaches. At length, coming to the place where its fury is to fall, it invests the whole horizon with darkness. During all the time of its approach, an hollow murmur is heard in the cavities of the mountains; and beasts and animals, sensible of its approach, are seen running over the fields, to seek for shelter. Nothing can be more terrible than its violence when it begins. The houses in those countries,

* Herbelot. Bibliotheque Oriental.

which are made of timber, the better to resist its fury, bend to the blast like osiers, and again recover their rectitude. The sun, which, but a moment before, blazed with meridian splendor, is totally shut out; and a midnight darkness prevails, except that the air is incessantly illuminated with gleams of lightening, by which one can easily see to read. The rain falls, at the same time, in torrents; and its descent has been resembled to what pours from the spouts of our houses after a violent shower. These hurricanes are not less offensive to the sense of smelling also; and never come without leaving the most noisome stench behind them. If the seamen also lay by their wet cloaths, for twenty-four hours, they are all found swarming with little white maggots, that were brought with the hurricane. Our first mariners, when they visited these regions, were ignorant of its effects, and the signs of its approach; their ships, therefore, were dashed to the bottom at the first onset; and numberless were the wrecks which the hurricane occasioned. But, at present, being forewarned of its approach, they strip their masts of all their sails, and thus patiently abide its fury. These hurricanes are common in all the tropical climates. On the coasts of Guinea they have frequently three, or four, in a day, that thus shut out the heavens, for a little space;

and when past leave all again in former splendor. They chiefly prevail, on that coast, in the intervals of the trade winds; the approach of which clears the air of its meteors, and gives these mortal showers that little degree of wholesomeness which they possess. They chiefly obtain there during the months of April and May; they are known, at Loango, from January to April; on the opposite coast of Africa, the hurricane season begins at May; and, in general, whenever a trade wind begins to cease, these irregular tempests are found to exert their fury.

All this is terrible; but there is a tempest, known in those climates, more formidable than any we have hitherto been describing, which is called, by the Spaniards, a Tornado. As the former was seen arriving from one part of the heavens, and making a line of destruction; so the winds in this seem to blow from every quarter, and settle upon one destined place, with such fury, that nothing can resist their vehemence. When they have all met, in their central spot, then the whirlwind begins with circular rapidity. The sphere, every moment widens, as it continues to turn, and catches every object that lies within its attraction. This, also, like the former, is preceded by a flattering calm; the air is every where hushed; and the sea is as

smooth as polished glass: however, as its effects are more dreadful than those of the ordinary hurricane, the mariner tries all the power of his skill to avoid it; which, if he fails of doing, there is the greatest danger of his going to the bottom. All along the coasts of Guinea, beginning about two degrees north of the line, and so downward, lengthwise, for about a thousand miles, and as many broad, the ocean is unnavigable, upon account of these tornados. In this torpid region there reigns unceasing tornados, or continual calms; among which, whatever ship is so unhappy as to fall, is totally deprived of all power of escaping. In this dreadful repose of all the elements, the solitary vessel is obliged to continue, without a single breeze to assist the mariner's wishes, except those whirlwinds, which only serve to encrease his calamity. At present, therefore, this part of the ocean is totally avoided; and, although there may be much gold along the coasts of that part of Africa, to tempt avarice, yet there is something, much more dreadful than the fabled dragon of antiquity, to guard the treasure. As the internal parts of that country are totally unknown to travellers, from their burning sands and extensive deserts, so here we find a vast tract of ocean, lying off its shores, equally unvisited by the mariner.

But of all those terrible tempests that deform the face of Nature, and repress human presumption, the sandy tempests of Arabia and Africa, are the most terrible, and strike the imagination most strongly. To conceive a proper idea of these, we are by no means to suppose them resembling those whirlwinds of dust that we sometimes see scattering in our air, and sprinkling their contents upon our roads, or meadows. The sand-storm of Africa, exhibits a very different appearance. As the sand of which the whirlwind is composed, is excessively fine, and almost resembles the parts of water, its motion entirely resembles that of a fluid; and the whole plain seems to float onward, like a slow inundation. The body of sand thus rolling, is deep enough to bury houses and palaces in its bosom: travellers who are crossing those extensive deserts, perceive its approach at a distance; and, in general, have time to avoid it, or turn out of its way, as it generally extends but to a moderate breadth. However, when it is extremely rapid, or very extensive, as sometimes is the case, no swiftness, no art, can avail; nothing then remains, but to meet death with fortitude, and submit to be buried alive with resignation.

It is happy for us of Britain, that we have no such calamity to fear; for, from this, even some parts of Europe are not entirely free. We have an account given us, in the History of the French Academy, of a miserable town in France, that is constantly in danger of being buried under a similar inundation; with which I will take leave to close this chapter. “In the neighbourhood of St. Paul de Leon, in Lower Brittany *, there lies a tract of country along the sea-side, which before the year 1666 was inhabited, but now lies deserted, by reason of the sands which cover it, to the height of twenty feet; and which every year advance more and more in land, and gain ground continually. From the time mentioned above, the sand has buried more than six leagues of the country inward; and it is now but half a league from the town of St. Paul; so that, in all appearance, the inhabitants must be obliged to abandon it entirely. In the country that has been overwhelmed, there are still to be seen the tops of some steeples peeping through the sand, and many chimnies that still remain above this sandy ocean. The inhabitants, however, had sufficient time to escape; but being deprived of their little all, they had no other re-

* Histoire de l'Academie des Sciences, an. 1722.

source but begging for their subsistence. This calamity chiefly owes its advancement to a north, or an east-wind, raising the sand, which is extremely fine, in such great quantities, and with such velocity, that M. Deslands, who gave the account, says, that while he was walking near the place, during a moderate breeze of wind, he was obliged, from time to time, to shake the sand from his cloaths and his hat, on which it was lodged in great quantities, and made them too heavy to be easily borne. Still further, when the wind was violent, it drove the sand across a little arm of the sea, into the town of Roscoff, and covered the streets of that place two feet deep; so that they have been obliged to carry it off in carts. It may also be observed, that there are several particles of iron mixed with the sand, which are readily affected by the loadstone. The part of the coast that furnishes these sands, is a tract of about four leagues in length; and is upon a level with the sea at high-water. The shore lies in such a manner as to leave its sands subject only to the north and east winds, that bear them farther up the shore. It is easy to conceive how the same sand that has at one time been borne a short way in land, may, by some succeeding and stronger

blast, be carried up much higher; and thus the whole may continue advancing forward, deluging the plain, and totally destroying its fertility. At the same time, the sea, from whence this deluge of sand proceeds, may furnish it in inexhaustible quantities. This unhappy country, thus overwhelmed in so singular a manner, may well justify what the ancients and the moderns have reported concerning those tempests of sand in Africa, that are said to destroy villages, and even armies, in their bosom."

C H A P. XXI.

Of Meteors, and such Appearances as result from a Combination of the Elements.

IN proportion as the substances of nature are more compounded and combined, their appearances become more inexplicable and amazing. The properties of water have been very nearly ascertained. Many of the qualities of air, earth, and fire, have been discovered, and estimated; but when these come to be united by Nature, they often produce a result which no artificial combinations can imitate; and we stand surprized, that although we are possessed of all those substances which Nature makes use of, she shews herself a much more various operator than the most skilful chymist ever appeared to be. Every cloud that moves, and every shower that falls, serves to mortify the philosopher's pride, and to shew him hidden qualities in air and water, that he finds it difficult to explain. Dews, hail, snow, and thunder, are not less difficult for being more common. Indeed, when we reflect on the manner in which Nature performs any one of these operations, our wonder encreases. To see water, which is heavier than air, rising in air, and then falling in

a form so very different from that in which it rose; to see the same fluid at one time descending in the form of hail, at another in that of snow; to see two clouds, by dashing against each other, producing an electrical fire, which no watery composition that we know of can effect; these, I say, serve sufficiently to excite our wonder; and still the more, in proportion as the objects are ever pressing on our curiosity. Much, however, has been written concerning the manner in which Nature operates in these productions; as nothing is so ungrateful to mankind as hopeless ignorance.

And first, with regard to the manner in which water evaporates, and rises to form clouds, much has been advanced, and many theories devised. All water *, say some, has a quantity of air mixed with it; and the heat of the sun darting down, disengages the particles of this air from the grosser fluid: the sun's rays being reflected back from the water, carry back with them those bubbles of air and water which, being lighter than the condensed air, will ascend till they meet with a more rarefied air; and they will then stand suspended. Experience, however, proves nothing of all this. Particles of air or fire, are not thus known to ascend with a thin coat of water; and, in fact, we know that

* *Speclacle de la Nature*, vol. iii.

the little particles of steam are solid drops of water. But besides this, water is known to evaporate more powerfully in the severest frost, than when the air is moderately warm *. Doctor Hamilton, therefore, of the university of Dublin, rejecting this theory, has endeavoured to establish another. According to him, as aqua fortis is a menstruum that dissolves iron, and keeps it mixed in the fluid; as aqua regia is a menstruum that dissolves gold; or as water dissolves salts to a certain quantity; so air is a menstruum that corrodes and dissolves a certain quantity of water, and keeps it suspended above. But however ingenious this may be, it can hardly be admitted; as we know, by Marriotte's experiment †, that if water and air be enclosed together, instead of the air's acting as a menstruum upon the water, the water will act as a menstruum upon the air, and take it all up. We know also, that of two bodies, that which is most fluid and penetrating, is most likely to be the menstruum of the other; but water is more fluid and penetrating than air, and, therefore, the most likely of the two to be the menstruum. We know that all bodies are more speedily acted upon, the more their parts are brought into con-

* Memoires de l'Accademie des Sciences, an. 1705.

† Mariotte, de la Nature de l'Air, p. 97, 106.

tact with the menstruum that dissolves them: but water, inclosed with compressed air, is not the more diminished thereby *. In short, we know, that cold, which diminishes the force of other menstrooms, is often found to promote evaporation. In this variety of opinion, and uncertainty of conjecture, I cannot avoid thinking that a theory of evaporation may be formed upon very simple and obvious principles, and embarrassed, as far as I can conceive, with very few objections.

We know that a repelling power prevails in nature, not less than an attractive one. This repulsion prevails strongly between the body of fire and that of water. If I plunge the end of a red hot bar of iron into a vessel of water, the fluid rises, and large drops of it fly up in all manner of directions, every part bubbling and steaming until the iron be cold. Why may we not, for a moment, compare the rays of the sun, darted directly upon the surface of the water, to so many bars of red hot iron; each bar, indeed, infinitely small, but not the less powerful? In this case, wherever a ray of fire darts, the water, from its repulsive quality, will be driven on all sides; and, of consequence, as in the case of the bar of iron, a part of it will rise. The

* See Boyle's Works, vol. ii. p. 619.

parts thus rising, however, will be extremely small; as the ray that darts is extremely so. The assemblage of the rays darting upon the water in this manner, will cause it to rise in a light thin steam above the surface; and as the parts of this steam are extremely minute, they will be lighter than air, and, consequently, float upon it. There is no need for supposing them bubbles of water, filled with fire; for any substance, even gold itself, will float on air, if its parts be made small enough; or, in other words, if its surface be sufficiently encreased. This water, thus disengaged from the general mass, will be still farther attenuated and broken by the reflected rays, and, consequently, more adapted for ascending.

From this plain account, every appearance in evaporation may be easily deduced. The quantity of heat encreases evaporation, because it raises a greater quantity of steam. The quantity of wind encreases evaporation; for, by waving the surface of the water, it thus exposes a greater surface to the evaporating rays. A dry frost, in some measure, assists the quantity of evaporation; as the quantity of rays are found to be no way diminished thereby. Moist weather alone prevents evaporation; for the rays being absorbed, refracted, and broken, by the

intervening moisture, before they arrive at the surface, cannot produce the effect; and the vapour will rise in a small proportion.

Thus far we have accounted for the ascent of vapours; but to account for their falling again, is attended with rather more difficulty. We have already observed, that the particles of vapour, disengaged from the surface of the water, will be broken and attenuated in their ascent, by the reflected, and even the direct rays, that happen to strike upon their minute surfaces. They will, therefore, continue to ascend, till they rise above the operation of the reflected rays, which reaches but to a certain height above the surface of the earth. Being arrived at this region, which is cold for want of reflected heat, they will be condensed, and suspended in the form of clouds. Some vapours that ascend to great heights, will be frozen into snow; others, that are condensed lower down, will put on the appearance of a mist, which we find the clouds to be, when we ascend among them, as they hang along the sides of a mountain. These clouds of snow and rain, being blown about by winds, are either entirely scattered and dispersed above, or they are still more condensed by motion, like a snow-ball, that grows more large and solid as it continues to roll. At last, therefore, they will

become too weighty for the air which first raised them, to sustain; and they will descend, with their excess of weight, either in snow or rain. But as they will fall precipitately, when they begin to descend, the air, in some measure, will resist the falling; for, as the descending fluid gathers velocity in its precipitation, the air will encrease its resistance to it, and the water will, therefore, be thus broken into rain; as we see, that water which falls from the tops of houses, though it begins in a spout, separates into drops before it has got to the bottom. Were it not for this happy interposition of the air, between us and the water falling from a considerable height above us, a drop of rain might fall with dangerous force, and an hail-stone might strike us with fatal rapidity.

In this manner, evaporation is produced by day; but when the sun goes down, a part of that vapour which his rays had excited, being no longer broken, and attenuated by the reflecting rays, it will become heavier than the air, even before it has reached the clouds; and it will, therefore, fall back in dews, which differ only from rain in descending before they have had time to condense into a visible form.

Hail, the Cartesians say, is a frozen cloud, half melted, and frozen again in its descent.

An hoar-frost is but a frozen dew. Lightning we know to be an electrical flash, produced by the opposition of two clouds: and thunder to be the sound proceeding from the same, continued by an echo reverberated among them. It would be to very little purpose, to attempt explaining exactly how these wonders are effected: we have as yet but little insight into the manner in which these meteors are found to operate upon each other; and, therefore, we must be contented with a detail rather of their effects than their causes.

In our own gentle climate, where Nature wears the mildest and kindest aspect, every meteor seems to befriend us. With us, rains fall in refreshing showers, to enliven our fields, and to paint the landscape with a more vivid beauty. Snows cover the earth, to preserve its tender vegetables from the inclemency of the departing winter. The dews descend with such an imperceptible fall as no way injures the constitution. Thunder itself is seldom injurious; and it is often wished by the husbandman, to clear the air, and to kill numberless insects that are noxious to vegetation. Hail is the most injurious meteor that is known in our climate; but it seldom visits us with violence, and then its fury is but transient.

One of the most dreadful storms we hear of *, was that at Hertfordshire, in the year 1697. It began by thunder and lightening, which continued for some hours, when suddenly a black cloud came forward, against the wind, and marked its passage with devastation. The hail-stones which it poured down, being measured, were found to be many of them fourteen inches round, and, consequently, as large as a bowling-green ball. Wherever it came, every plantation fell before it; it tore up the ground, split great oaks, and other trees, without number; the fields of rye were cut down, as if levelled with a scythe; wheat, oats, and barley, suffered the same damage. The inhabitants found but a precarious shelter, even in their houses, their tiles and windows being broke by the violence of the hail-stones, which, by the force with which they came, seemed to have descended from a great height. The birds, in this universal wreck, vainly tried to escape by flight; pigeons, crows, rooks, and much more of the smaller and feebler kinds, were brought down. An unhappy young man, who had not time to take shelter, was killed; one of his eyes was struck out of his head, and his body was all over black with the bruises: another had just time to escape, but not

* Phil. Transf. vol. ii. p. 147.

without the most imminent danger, his body being bruised all over. But what is most extraordinary, all this fell within the compass of a mile.

Mezeray, in his History of France, tells us of a shower of hail much more terrible, which happened in the year 1510, when the French monarch invaded Italy. There was, for a time, an horrid darkness, thicker than that of midnight, which continued till the terrors of mankind were changed to still more terrible objects, by thunder and lightening breaking the gloom, and bringing on such a shower of hail, as no history of human calamities could equal. These hail-stones were of a bluish colour; and some of them weighed not less than an hundred pounds. A noisome vapour of sulphur attended the storm. All the birds and beasts of the country were entirely destroyed. Numbers of the human race suffered the same fate. But what is still more extraordinary, the fishes themselves found no protection from their native element; but were equal sufferers in the general calamity.

These, however, are terrors that are seldom exerted in our mild climates. They only serve to mark the page of history with wonder; and stand as admonitions to mankind, of the various stores of punishment in the hands of the

Deity, which his power can treasure up, and his mercy can suspend.

In the temperate zones, therefore, meteors are rarely found thus terrible; but between the tropics, and near the poles, they assume very dreadful and various appearances. In those inclement regions, where cold and heat exert their chief power, meteors seem peculiarly to have fixed their residence. They are seen there in a thousand terrifying forms, astonishing to Europeans, yet disregarded by the natives, from their frequency. The wonders of air, fire, and water, are there combined, to produce the most tremendous effects; and to sport with the labours and apprehensions of mankind. Lightenings, that flash without noise; hurricanes, that tear up the earth; clouds, that all at once pour down their contents, and produce an instant deluge; mock suns; northern lights, that illuminate half the hemisphere; circular rainbows; halo's; fleeting balls of fire; clouds, reflecting back the images of things on earth, like mirrors; and water-spouts, that burst from the sea, to join with the mists that hang immediately above them. These are but a part of the phænomena that are common in those countries; and from many of which, our own climate is, in a great measure, exempted.

The meteors of the torrid zone, however, are different from those that are found near the polar circles : and it may readily be supposed, that in those countries where the sun exerts the greatest force in raising vapours of all kinds, there should be the greatest quantity of meteors. Upon the approach of the winter months, as they are called, under the line, which usually begin about May, the sky, from a fiery brightness, begins to be overcast, and the whole horizon seems wrapt in a muddy cloud. Mists and vapours still continue to rise; and the air, which so lately before was clear and elastic, now becomes humid, obscure, and stifling: the fogs become so thick, that the light of the sun seems in a manner excluded; nor would its presence be known, but for the intense and suffocating heat of its beams, which dart through the gloom, and, instead of dissipating, only serve to encrease the mist. After this preparation, there follows an almost continual succession of thunder, rain, and tempests. During this dreadful season, the streets of cities flow like rivers; and the whole country wears the appearance of an ocean. The inhabitants often make use of this opportunity to lay in a stock of fresh water, for the rest of the year; as the same cause which pours

down the deluge at one season, denies the kindly shower at another. The thunder which attends the fall of these rains, is much more terrible than that we are generally acquainted with. With us, the flash is seen at some distance, and the noise shortly after ensues; our thunder generally rolls on one quarter of the sky, and one stroke pursues another. But here it is otherwise; the whole sky, all around, seems illuminated with unremitted flashes of lightening; every part of the air seems productive of its own thunders; and every cloud produces its own shock. The strokes come so thick, that the inhabitants can scarce mark the intervals; but all is one unremitted roar of elementary confusion. It should seem, however, that the lightening of those countries is not so fatal, or so dangerous, as with us; since, in this case, the torrid zone would be uninhabitable.

When these terrors have ceased, with which, however, the natives are familiar, meteors of another kind begin to make their appearance. The intense beams of the sun, darting upon stagnant waters, that generally cover the surface of the country, raise vapours of various kinds. Floating bodies of fire, which assume different names, rather from their accidental forms, than from any real difference between them, are seen

without surprize. The draco volans, or flying dragon, as it is called; the ignis fatuus, or wandering fire; the fires of St. Helmo, or the mariner's light, are every where frequent; and of these we have numberless descriptions. "As I was riding in Jamaica," says, Mr. Barbham, "one morning from my habitation, situated about three miles north-west from Jago de la Bega, I saw a ball of fire, appearing to me of the bigness of a bomb, swiftly falling down with a great blaze. At first I thought it fell into the town; but when I came nearer, I saw many people gathered together, a little to the southward, in the Savannah, to whom I rode up, to enquire the cause of their meeting: they were admiring, as I found, the ground's being strangely broke up and ploughed by a ball of fire; which, as they said, fell down there. I observed there were many holes in the ground; one in the middle of the bigness of a man's head, and five or six smaller round about it, of the bigness of one's fist, and so deep as not to be fathomed by such implements as were at hand. It was observed, also, that all the green herbage was burnt up, near the holes; and there continued a strong smell of sulphur near the place, for some time after."

Ulloa gives an account of one of a similar kind, at Quito*. "About nine at night," says he, "a globe of fire appeared to rise from the side of the mountain Pichinca, and so large, that it spread a light over all the part of the city facing that mountain. The house where I lodged, looking that way, I was surprized with an extraordinary light, darting through the crevices of the window-shutters. On this appearance, and the bustle of the people, in the street, I hastened to the window, and came time enough to see it, in the middle of its career; which continued from west to south, till I lost sight of it, being intercepted by a mountain, that lay between me and it. It was round; and its apparent diameter about a foot. I observed it to rise from the sides of Pichinca; although, to judge from its course, it was behind that mountain where this congeries of inflammable matter was kindled. In the first half of its visible course it emitted a prodigious effulgence, then it began gradually to grow dim; so that, upon its disappearing behind the intervening mountain, its light was very faint."

Meteors, of this kind, are very frequently seen between the tropics; but they sometimes, also, visit the more temperate regions of Europe. We have the description of a very ex-

* Ulloa, vol. i. p. 41.

traordinary one, given us by Montanari, that serves to shew to what great heights, in our atmosphere, these vapours are found to ascend. In the year 1676, a great globe of fire was seen at Bononia, in Italy, about three quarters of an hour after sun-set. It past westward, with a most rapid course, and at the rate of not less than a hundred and sixty miles in a minute, which is much swifter than the force of a cannon-ball, and, at last, stood over the Adriatic sea. In its course it crossed over all Italy; and, by computation, it could not have been less than thirty-eight miles above the surface of the earth. In the whole line of its course, wherever it approached, the inhabitants below could distinctly hear it, with a hissing noise, resembling that of a fire-work. Having past away to sea, towards Corfica, it was heard, at last, to go off with a most violent explosion, much louder than that of a cannon; and, immediately after, another noise was heard, like the rattling of a great cart, upon a stony pavement; which was, probably, nothing more than the echo of the former sound. Its magnitude, when at Bononia, appeared twice as long as the moon, one way; and as broad the other; so that, considering its height, it could not have been less than a mile long, and half a mile broad. From the height

at which this was seen, and there being no volcano, on that quarter of the world, from whence it came, it is more than probable that this terrible globe was kindled on some part of the contrary side of the globe, in those regions of vapours, which we have been just describing; and thus, rising above the air, and passing, in a course opposite to that of the earth's motion, in this manner it acquired its amazing rapidity.

To these meteors, common enough southward, we will add one more of a very uncommon kind, which was seen, by Ulloa, at Quito, in Peru; the beauty of which will, in some measure, serve to relieve us, after the description of those hideous ones preceding. "At day-break," says he, "the whole mountain of Pambamarca, where we then resided, was encompassed with very thick clouds; which the rising of the sun dispersed so far, as to leave only some vapours, too fine to be seen. On the side opposite to the rising sun, and about ten fathoms distant from the place where we were standing, we saw, as in a looking-glass, each his own image; the head being, as it were, the center of three circular rainbows, one without the other, and just near enough to each other as that the colours of the internal verged upon those more external; while round all was a circle of white,

but with a greater space between. In this manner these circles were erected, like a mirror, before us; and as we moved, they moved, in disposition and order. But, what is most remarkable, though we were fix in number, every one saw the phenomenon, with regard to himself, and not that relating to others. The diameter of the arches gradually altered, as the sun rose above the horizon; and the whole, after continuing a long time, insensibly faded away. In the beginning, the diameter of the inward iris, taken from its last colour, was about five degrees and a half; and that of the white arch, which surrounded the rest, was not less than sixty-seven degrees. At the beginning of the phenomenon, the arches seemed of an oval or elliptical figure, like the disk of the sun; and afterwards became perfectly circular. Each of these was of a red colour, bordered with an orange; and the last bordered by a bright yellow, which altered into a straw colour, and this turned to a green; but, in all, the external colour remained red." Such is the description of one of the most beautiful illusions that has been ever seen in nature. This alone seems to have combined all the splendours of optics in one view. To understand the manner, therefore, how this phænomena was produced,

would require a perfect knowledge of optics; which it is not our present province to enter upon. It will be sufficient here, therefore, only to observe, that all these appearances arise from the density of the cloud, together with its uncommon and peculiar situation, with respect to the spectator and the sun. It may be observed, that but one of these three rainbows was real, the rest being only reflections thereof. It may also be observed, that whenever the spectator stands between the sun and a cloud of falling rain, a rainbow is seen, which is nothing more than the reflection of the different coloured rays of light from the bosom of the cloud. If, for instance, we take a glass globe, filled with water, and hang it up before us, opposite the sun, in many situations, it will appear transparent; but if it is raised higher, or sideways, to an angle of forty-five degrees, it will at first appear red; altered a very little higher, yellow; then green, then blue, then violet colour; in short, it will assume successively all the colours of the rainbow; but, if raised higher, still it will become transparent again. A falling shower may be considered as an infinite number of these little transparent globes, assuming different colours, by being placed at the proper heights. The rest of the shower will appear

transparent, and no part of it will seem coloured; but such as are at angles of forty-five degrees from the eye, forty-five degrees upward, forty-five degrees on each side, and forty-five degrees downward, did not the plain of the earth prevent us. We, therefore, see only an arch of the rainbow, the lower part being cut off from our sight by the earth's interposition. However, upon the tops of very high mountains, circular rainbows are seen, because we can see to an angle of forty-five degrees downward, as well as upward, or sideways, and therefore we take in the rainbow's complete circle.

In those forlorn regions, round the poles, the meteors, though of another kind, are not less numerous and alarming. When the winter begins, and the cold prepares to set in, the same misty appearance which is produced in the southern climates by the heat, is there produced by the contrary extreme*. The sea smokes like an oven, and a fog arises, which mariners call the frost smoke. This cutting mist most commonly raises blisters on several parts of the body; and, as soon as it is wafted to some colder part of the atmosphere, it freezes to little icy particles, which are driven by the wind, and create such a cutting cold on land, that

* Paul Egede's History of Greenland.

the limbs of the inhabitants are sometimes frozen, and drop off.

There also, halos, or luminous circles round the moon, are oftener seen than in any other part of the earth, being formed by the frost smoke; although the air otherwise seems to be clear. A lunar rainbow also, is often seen there, though somewhat different from that which is common with us; as it appears of a pale white, striped with grey. In these countries also, the aurora borealis streams, with peculiar lustre, and variety of colours. In Greenland it generally arises in the east, and darts its sportive fires, with variegated beauty, over the whole horizon. Its appearance is almost constant in winter; and, at those seasons when the sun departs, to return no more for half a year, this meteor kindly rises to supply its beams, and affords sufficient light for all the purposes of existence. However, in the very midst of their tedious night, the inhabitants are not entirely forsaken. The tops of the mountains are often seen painted with the red rays of the sun; and the poor Greenlander from thence begins to date his chronology. It would appear whimsical to read a Greenland calendar, in which we might be told, that one of their chiefs, having lived forty days, died, at last, of a good old age; and

that his widow continued for half a day, to deplore his loss, with great fidelity, before she admitted a second husband.

The meteors of the day, in these countries, are not less extraordinary than those of the night : mock suns are often reflected upon an opposite cloud ; and the ignorant spectator fancies that there are often three or four real suns in the firmament at the same time. In this splendid appearance the real sun is always readily known by its superior brightness, every reflexion being seen with diminished splendour. The solar rainbow there is often seen different from ours. Instead of a pleasing variety of colours, it appears of a pale white, edged with a stripe of dusky yellow ; the whole being reflected from the bosom of a frozen cloud.

But, of all the meteors which mock the imagination with an appearance of reality, those strange illusions that are seen there, in fine serene weather, are the most extraordinary and entertaining. “ Nothing,” says Krantz, “ ever surprized me more, than, on a fine warm summer’s day, to perceive the islands that lie four leagues west of our shore, putting on a form quite different from what they are known to have. As I stood gazing upon them, they appeared, at first, infinitely greater than what they naturally are ; and seemed as if I viewed them through a large

magnifying glass. They were not thus only made larger, but brought nearer to me. I plainly descried every stone upon the land, and all the furrows filled with ice, as if I stood close by. When this illusion had lasted for a while, the prospect seemed to break up, and a new scene of wonder to present itself. The islands seemed to travel to the shore, and represented a wood, or a tall cut hedge. The scene then shifted, and shewed the appearance of all sorts of curious figures; as ships with sails, streamers, and flags; antique elevated castles, with decayed turrets; and a thousand forms, for which fancy found a resemblance in nature. When the eye had been satisfied with gazing, the whole groupe of riches seemed to rise in air, and at length vanish into nothing. At such times the weather is quite serene and clear; but compressed with such subtle vapours, as it is in very hot weather; and these appearing between the eye and the object, give it all that variety of appearances which glasses of different refrangibilities would have done." Mr. Krantz observes that, commonly a couple of hours afterwards, a gentle west wind and a visible mist follows, which puts an end to this *lusus naturæ*.

It were easy to swell this catalogue of meteors

with the names of many others, both in our own climate and in other parts of the world. Such as falling stars, which are thought to be no more than unctuous vapours, raised from the earth to small heights, and continuing to shine till that matter which first raised, and supported them, being burnt out, they fall back again to the earth, with extinguished flame. Burning spears, which are a peculiar kind of aurora borealis; bloody rains which are said to be the excrements of an insect, that at that time has been raised into the air. Showers of stones, fishes, and ivy-berries, at first, no doubt, raised into the air by tempests, in one country, and falling at some considerable distance, in the manner of rain, to astonish another. But omitting these, of which we know little more than what is thus briefly mentioned, I will conclude this chapter with the description of a water-spout; a most surprising phenomenon; not less dreadful to mariners than astonishing to the observer of nature.

These spouts are seen very commonly in the tropical seas, and sometimes in our own. Those seen by Tournefort, in the Mediterranean, he has described as follows. "The first of these," says this great botanist, "that we saw, was about a musket-shot from our ship.

There we perceived the water began to boil, and to rise about a foot above its level. The water was agitated and whitish ; and above its surface there seemed to stand a smoke, such as might be imagined to come from wet straw before it begins to blaze. It made a sort of a murmuring sound, like that of a torrent, heard at a distance, mixed, at the same time, with an hissing noise, like that of a serpent : shortly after we perceived a column of this smoke rise up to the clouds, at the same time whirling about with great rapidity. It appeared to be as thick as one's finger ; and the former sound still continued. When this disappeared, after lasting for about eight minutes, upon turning to the opposite quarter of the sky, we perceived another, which began in the manner of the former ; presently after a third appeared in the west ; and instantly beside it still another arose. The most distant of these three could not be above a musket-shot from the ship. They all continued like so many heaps of wet straw set on fire, that continued to smoke, and to make the same noise as before. We soon after perceived each, with its respective canal, mounting up in the clouds, and spreading where it touched ; the cloud, like the mouth of a trumpet, making a figure, to express it intelligibly,

as if the tail of an animal were pulled at one end by a weight. These canals were of a whitish colour, and so tinged, as I suppose, by the water which was contained in them; for, previous to this, they were apparently empty, and of the colour of transparent glass. These canals were not straight, but bent in some parts, and far from being perpendicular, but rising in their clouds with a very inclined ascent. But what is very particular, the cloud to which one of them was pointed happening to be driven by the wind, the spout still continued to follow its motion, without being broken; and passing behind one of the others, the spouts crossed each other, in the form of a St. Andrew's cross. In the beginning they were all about as thick as one's finger, except at the top, where they were broader, and two of them disappeared; but shortly after, the last of the three encreased considerably; and its canal, which was at first so small, soon became as thick as a man's arm, then as his leg, and at last thicker than his whole body. We saw distinctly, through this transparent body, the water, which rose up with a kind of spiral motion; and it sometimes diminished a little of its thickness, and again resumed the same; sometimes widening at top, and sometimes at bot-

tom; exactly resembling a gut filled with water, pressed with the fingers, to make the fluid rise, or fall; and I am well convinced, that this alteration in the spout was caused by the wind, which pressed the cloud, and impelled it to give up its contents. After some time its bulk was so diminished as to be no thicker than a man's arm again; and thus, swelling and diminishing, it at last became very small. In the end, I observed the sea which was raised about it to resume its level by degrees, and the end of the canal that touched it to become as small as if it had been tied round with a cord; and this continued till the light, striking through the cloud, took away the view. I still, however, continued to look, expecting that its parts would join again, as I had before seen in one of the others, in which the spout was more than once broken, and yet again came together; but I was disappointed, for the spout appeared no more."

Many have been the solutions offered for this surprizing appearance. Mr. Buffon supposes the spout, here described, to proceed from the operation of fire, beneath the bed of the sea; as the waters at the surface are thus seen agitated. However, the solution of Dr. Stuart is not divested of probability; who thinks it may

be accounted for by suction, as in the application of a cupping-glass to the skin.

Wherever spouts of this kind are seen they are extremely dreaded by mariners; for if they happen to fall upon a ship they most commonly dash it to the bottom. But, if the ship be large enough to sustain the deluge, they are at least sure to destroy its sails and rigging, and render it unfit for sailing. It is said that vessels of any force usually fire their guns at them, loaden with a bar of iron; and, if so happy as to strike them, the water is instantly seen to fall from them, with a dreadful noise, though without any further mischief.

I am at a loss whether we ought to reckon these spouts called typhons; which are sometimes seen at land, of the same kind with those so often described by mariners, at sea, as they seem to differ in several respects. That, for instance, observed at Hatfield, in Yorkshire, in 1687, as it is described by the person who saw it, seems rather to have been a whirlwind than a water-spout. The season in which it appeared was very dry, the weather extremely hot, and the air very cloudy. After the wind had blown for some time, with considerable force, and condensed the black clouds one upon another, a great whirling of the air

ensued; upon which the center of the clouds, every now and then, darted down, in the shape of a thick long black pipe; in which the relator could distinctly view a motion, like that of a screw, continually screwing up to itself, as it were, whatever it happened to touch. In its progress it moved slowly over a grove of young trees, which it violently bent, in a circular motion. Going forward to a barn, it in a minute stript it of all the thatch, and filled the whole air with the same. As it came near the relator, he perceived that its blackness proceeded from a gyration of the clouds, by contrary winds, meeting in a point, or a center; and where the greatest force was exerted, there darting down, like an Archimedes's screw, to suck up all that came in its way. Another which he saw, some time after, was attended with still more terrible effects; levelling, or tearing up great oak trees, catching up the birds in its vortex, and dashing them against the ground. In this manner it proceeded, with an audible whirling noise, like that of a mill; and, at length, dissolved, after having done much mischief.

But we must still continue to suspend our assent as to the nature even of these land spouts;

since they have been sometimes found to drop, in a great column of water, at once upon the earth, and produce an instant inundation*, which could not readily have happened had they been caused by the gyration of a whirlwind only. Indeed, every conjecture, regarding these meteors, seems to me entirely unsatisfactory. They sometimes appear in the calmest weather at sea, of which I have been an eye-witness; and, therefore, these are not caused by a whirlwind. They are always capped by a cloud; and, therefore, are not likely to proceed from fires at the bottom. They change place; and, therefore, suction seems impracticable. In short, we still want facts, upon which to build a rational theory; and, instead of knowledge, we must be contented with admiration. To be well acquainted with the appearances of Nature, even though we are ignorant of their causes, often constitutes the most useful wisdom.

* Phil. Transf. vol. iv, p. 2, 108.

C H A P. XXII.

The Conclusion.

HAVING thus gone through a particular description of the earth, let us now pause for a moment, to contemplate the great picture before us. The universe may be considered as the palace in which the Deity resides; and this earth as one of its apartments. In this, all the meaner races of animated nature mechanically obey him; and stand ready to execute his commands, without hesitation. Man alone is found refractory; he is the only being endued with a power of contradicting these mandates. The Deity was pleased to exert superior power in creating him a superior being; a being endued with a choice of good and evil; and capable, in some measure, of co-operating with his own intentions. Man, therefore, may be considered as a limited creature, endued with powers imitative of those residing in the Deity. He is thrown into a world that stands in need of his help; and has been granted a power of producing harmony from partial confusion.

If, therefore, we consider the earth as allotted for our habitation, we shall find, that much has been given us to enjoy, and much

to amend; that we have ample reasons for our gratitude, and still more for our industry. In those great outlines of nature, to which art cannot reach, and where our greatest efforts must have been ineffectual, God himself has finished these with amazing grandeur and beauty. Our beneficent Father has considered these parts of nature as peculiarly his own; as parts which no creature could have skill or strength to amend: and therefore, made them incapable of alteration, or of more perfect regularity. The heavens, and the firmament, shew the wisdom, and the glory of the Workman. Astronomers, who are best skilled in the symmetry of systems, can find nothing there that they can alter for the better. God made these perfect, because no subordinate being could correct their defects.

When, therefore, we survey nature on this side, nothing can be more splendid, more correct, or amazing. We there behold a Deity residing in the midst of an universe, infinitely extended every way, animating all, and cheering the vacuity with his presence! We behold an immense and shapeless mass of matter, formed into worlds by his power, and dispersed at intervals, to which even the imagination cannot travel! In this great theatre of his glory, a thousand suns, like our own, animate their respec-

tive systems, appearing and vanishing at divine command. We behold our own bright luminary, fixed in the center of its system, wheeling its planets in times proportioned to their distances, and at once dispensing light, heat, and action. The earth also is seen with its twofold motion; producing, by the one, the change of seasons; and, by the other, the grateful vicissitudes of day and night. With what silent magnificence is all this performed! with what seeming ease! The works of art are exerted with interrupted force; and their noisy progress discovers the obstructions they receive: but the earth, with a silent steady rotation, successively presents every part of its bosom to the sun; at once imbibing nourishment and light from that parent of vegetation and fertility.

But not only provisions of heat and light are thus supplied, but its whole surface is covered with a transparent atmosphere, that turns with its motion, and guards it from external injury. The rays of the sun are thus broken into a genial warmth; and, while the surface is assisted, a gentle heat is produced in the bowels of the earth, which contributes to cover it with verdure. Waters also are supplied in healthful abundance, to support life, and assist vegetation. Mountains arise, to diversify the prospect, and

give a current to the stream. Seas extend from one continent to the other, replenished with animals, that may be turned to human support; and also serving to enrich the earth with a sufficiency of vapour. Breezes fly along the surface of the fields, to promote health and vegetation. The coolness of the evening invites to rest; and the freshness of the morning renews for labour.

Such are the delights of the habitation that has been assigned to man; without any one of these, he must have been wretched; and none of these could his own industry have supplied. But while many of his wants are thus kindly furnished, on the one hand, there are numberless inconveniences to excite his industry on the other. This habitation, though provided with all the conveniences of air, pasturage, and water, is but a desert place, without human cultivation. The lowest animal finds more conveniences in the wilds of nature, than he who boasts himself their lord. The whirlwind, the inundation, and all the asperities of the air, are peculiarly terrible to man, who knows their consequences, and, at a distance, dreads their approach. The earth itself, where human art has not pervaded, puts on a frightful gloomy appearance. The forests are dark and tangled; the meadows over-grown with rank weeds; and the brooks stray without a de-

terminated channel. Nature, that has been kind to every lower order of beings, has been quite neglectful with regard to him ; to the savage uncontriving man the earth is an abode of desolation, where his shelter is insufficient, and his food precarious.

A world thus furnished with advantages on one side, and inconveniences on the other, is the proper abode of reason, is the fittest to exercise the industry of a free and a thinking creature. These evils, which art can remedy, and prescience guard against, are a proper call for the exertion of his faculties ; and they tend still more to assimilate him to his Creator. God beholds, with pleasure, that being which he has made, converting the wretchedness of his natural situation into a theatre of triumph ; bringing all the headlong tribes of nature into subjection to his will ; and producing that order and uniformity upon earth, of which his own heavenly fabric is so bright an example.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE PART II.

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